THE Hudson REVIEW

ERIC A. HAVELOCK:
The Aeneid and Its Translators

PETER REDGROVE:
From Every Chink of the Ark

GRACE SCHULMAN:
Man of Two Worlds

VERNON YOUNG:
Polo Was Invented by Chinese Women

MICHAEL BENEDIKT:
Translations from Max Jacob

Poems by DAVID BROMIGE, ROBERT NYE, JOHN ENGELS, PETER SERCHUK.

Articles and Reviews by MARVIN MUDRICK, RICHMOND LATTIMORE, CHARLES W. MILLARD, ROGER SALE, J. E. CHAMBERLIN, ROBERT S. CLARK, HAYDEN CARRUTH.

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THE Hudson Review

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I should like to correct a misleading impression about Harold Nicolson's political affiliation in my article in the Summer issue. Harold Nicolson was an M.P. for West Leicester from 1935 to 1945. His party was the tiny National Labour Party, which often allied itself with the Conservatives. Many of his friends believed he was closer to the Liberals in his own thinking, and of course his friends and associates were of many political allegiances.

SONYA RUDIKOFF

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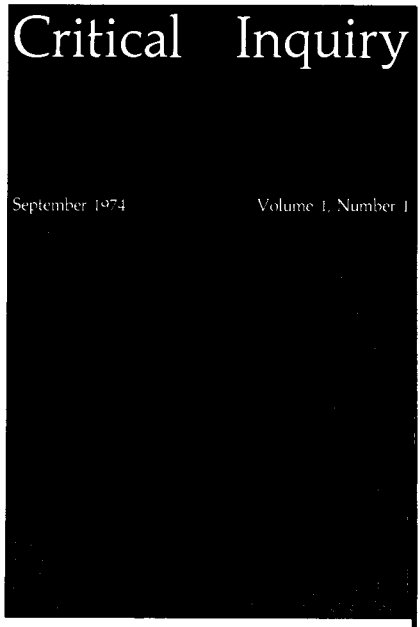

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Notes on Contributors

PETER REDGROVE,* the virtuoso English poet, novelist, and critic, has published innumerable collections of verse and several novels. His latest book of poetry is *The Alphaladybets* (forthcoming from Routledge and Kegan Paul). Mr. Redgrove's background and interests are wide. He was a scientific journalist and editor and holds brown belts in both the B.J.A. and the Otani School of Judo. He has broadcast frequently for the BBC and contributed much writing to their programmes. He has also appeared on and written for television. Redgrove, Resident Poet at the Falmouth School of Art, Cornwall, is visiting the United States this fall.

ERIC A. HAVELOCK* has chaired the Classics Departments at both Harvard (1955-1960) and Yale (1963-1968). He is the author of several books and is now Sterling Professor Emeritus of Yale.

DAVID BROMIGE's most recent book of poems is *Tight Corners & What's Around Them* (Black Sparrow).

MICHAEL BENEDIKT* has published three collections of poems: *Mole Notes, Sky,* and *The Body* (Wesleyan University). He is the editor of the forthcoming *The Prose Poem* (Dell) and *The Poetry of Surrealism* (Little-Brown). An Editorial Associate of *Art News* over the past decade, he is now poetry editor of *The Paris Review*. Mr. Benedikt has taught at Bennington, Sarah Lawrence and Hampshire Colleges.

GRACE SCHULMAN is poetry editor of *The Nation* and Assistant Professor of English at Baruch College. She has recently been appointed Director of the Poetry Center at the 92nd St YM-YWHA.

ROBERT NYE, a young English poet and critic, has published one collection of poetry in the United States—*Darker Ends* (Hill & Wang, 1969).

PETER SERCHUK* is a graduate student in English at the University of Michigan, where earlier this year he received an Avery and Julia Hopwood Award in the category of "Major Poetry." After he completes his degree, Mr. Serchuk plans to travel and teach in France. The poems in this issue are his first to be published in a national magazine.

JOHN ENGELS* has a second volume of poetry scheduled next Spring, *Signals from the Safety Coffin* (University of Pittsburgh). Professor Engels teaches English at St. Michael's College.

CHARLES W. MILLARD has recently been appointed Chief Curator of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, part of the Smithsonian Institution.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE is reworking his translation and interpretations of Pindar.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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Announces winners of its 1974 prizes

Fiction David Zane Mairowitz for "The Bite" in v. 24, no. 4.

Poetry Leslie Silko for "Eight Poems" in v. 24, no. 4.

Open Subject Hiroaki Sato for translations of Modern Japanese Poets in v. 25, no. 2.

Next year we hope to distribute comparable awards, for the best work published in numbers v. 25, no. 4 through v. 26, no. 3, in other words, from May 1974 through April 1975. All fiction, poetry, criticism, photography, and graphics appearing in these issues will be eligible.

FUTURE ISSUES

volume 26, number 1, August 1974: Robert Creeley, Leslie Silko, Anselm Hollo, Frank O'Hara, John Wieners, Cynthia Lasky, Yannis Ritsos, Frantisek Hrubin.

volume 26, number 2, October 1974: First English translations from the work of Heimito von Doderer; Peter von Tramin; "Handke's Ride Across Lake Constance"

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PETER REDGROVE

From Every Chink of the Ark

We are all still because the sea is moving so hard.
We are turtleshells carved with the heads of eagles,
We are tiny black unbreathing gibbon-nipples,
We are a clenched tapestry of eels
And two arid scorpions brooching our boulder,
And two goody-grabbing blowflies like muddy studs.
We are lizards that freeze becoming marble icecreams
We are iguanas that empty themselves out of enamelled
tennis-shoes,
We are a python that is a bough with tightly-shut lids
In a green fruit still as our sloughed skin
Which is a glass canoe full of scurf.

The squid is breathing jewels, he is amethyst
In pulses no tourmaline yes chrysolite;
The lion in fact paces, but as syrup paces.

We are not what we seem the bats are only macintosh
Captain Noah and his seven are boxwood, he is Captain Nemo
They are also suits of armour marked vacant not for drowning
While the poison waters collide like green ghosttrains
One immense fruity corpsecake slicing itself instantly

We are not offensive we are a lean smile on stilts
Greyhounds of broomstick, alligators of icon,
Leopards of netsuke, soothing-stone snails

But water bustles and brays
Like a great green ass rolling in white thistles

Our ass is a gold statue, ready to topple,
Be brayed in water, and drunk
Fate's football

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The footballers are furious
Striped currents
The referee is whistling his winds
The sky is a face-stadium
Spit-angry with millions

The interior of the football
Quiet as the Vatican in wartime
Nothing stirs, hugging itself

Ararat's peak
Nothing stirs

Then from every chink
A new world!

The boat blows away.

This Cornish Passage

The stone church whitewashed for navigation.
These terrible seas. The tall church trees
Spurting rooks like fountains of the dead,
The gorge leaning towards the shore and the bolsters
Great as giants' heads, great as their boulders,
Great as their white beds, towards the sailing vessels.

This mouth, with a white church in it.
The yarrows bend, and weave themselves into odours.
The beetles' furniture of fretted lichen.
Dove-grey tombs, a soft wind.
These dead wrecked in their churchyard, all around.

The gossamer like breathing ladders of glass.

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From the Answers to Job

The ghost that rapes, photographed suddenly on the stairs.
I see him climbing the stairs in flashes
I see him enter the bedroom in white flashes
In flashes he is unbuckling his workman's belt
He stands behind me in flashes as I write
I have risen from my bath and towelled myself dry
I am wrapped about in my clean towelling dressing-gown
I write about the ghost and he enters me in flashes
He sits in my clean body as on a human throne
I am the ghost who rapes who comes back for more
Who cannot rest because he cannot quite do it
I am the man who rapes, I have a ghost that needs to die
I seek the woman who will kill my ghost, she needs to be broken

The rain begins and each drop is charged with knowledge
There is the ghost who smiles in the river
And the ghost who eats dung because he is a mushroom
The ghost who eats corpses because she is grass
The ghosts which eat grass because they are beefs
The ghosts who are beefeaters because they are men
The ghosts who eat coal because they are flames
The ghost who rapes steps into my body
Newly-clean out of the quick flame of the candle into my body
He sits as on a throne in the slow flame of my body
The slow waxy flame of my body

The candle looks over my shoulder, my right shoulder, my left shoulder,
The candle creaks and spits and it says "grease"
No it says "ease" no it says "jeeze" and very quietly "us"
It eases us, peering over my shoulder
In the mirror, like the slant eye of a beast.
The shadows in the draught swirl about my head,
They are trying to wrench my face backwards
Into a ram's face with great horns of shadow,
A wise goat-face with a great muzzle, with moist nostrils,

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With a little string of phlegm whipping in the left nostril
A ram's face with pupils of black stone and pleated gold foil
I raise the candle placing it between the goat's horns
Which are moons its flame like an eye open between moons
I ease you the lips of leather whisper I ease you
A little string of blood whipping in the left nostril.

Current Affairs

The witch-trials begin. Joan Rook
Led into court backwards
To protect the judge against her eye.
The judge eyed her, and burnt her.

Today there is a sudden red stake and a smell of ashes
A shock-wave and a bass cry in a suitcase
And in a carrier-bag. A bomb is a swift fire
That reduces to ashes and a wind
That scatters the ashes. In the judge's car
Rides a marksman with a small pupil of steel,
The cornices are lined with eyes that bite,
The bomb touches her on the shoulder, elects her, the same Joan,
Says, "You are today's witch. Burn." She speaks
Some blood. Ashes of glass squeal in the station winds.

Sam's Call

for Derek Toyne

My uncle Sam Lines always seemed
an enlightened person to me, but then I
was a child. I never went
to chapel where he preached, though people told me

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he was a marvellous preacher. I asked him what he said:
he told me he never could remember.

He saw his double in the garden. Came in to my aunt:
I just saw a funny chap, an old un under the trees.
All right, said my aunt. Went up to him (he said)
to take a closer look and it was me.

He had a lovely death. My aunt told me.
Almost gone, then up he sat, bolt upright and cried:
Meg lass, get me a clean shirt, I'll not be seen
dead in this one. They got him one,
struggled him into it, he never spoke again.

That was when I was guided, the one and only time.
Sam was laid out and waiting for his funeral.
I felt suddenly curious about an old box in the barn
Meg had said was full of old writings, now I must see them.
I went out quietly because of the death in the house
and the blinds down into the barn-smell
of chicken-shit and damp feed. Inside the box I found
one old piece of paper with green writing
"To be buried with Sam Lines," folded
a red mark and something stuck round and crinkled,
like an ancient condom, then the tears

spurted into my hand, I understood
it was his caul he had been born with.

He could tell the time without looking at his watch.
He'd sleep in his chair by the range; after supper
we kids'd creep up, whisper in his ear,
(head back and closed eyes fixed on the ceiling)
"Sam, what's the time?" His big oakapple hand
crept into his waistcoat head still asleep
He took his turnip watch out and said the time
from his sleeping mouth. He was always right
you could check him from the watch his big hand
would close and tuck away into its pocket again.

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Plain Poems of Change in February

One
Caesar died
The boy pared his nails
Rome fell
The boy crossed his legs
Pope Paul crumbled
Boy, we know you,
Give us parole.

Two
On Easter Day
I walked in the park
A window sun-flashed
I thought of a distant flat
And a woman writing.

Three
The long bones on the path
By the strenuous stream
Woke me with a start.
I had been travelling the winter
Merely pacing
Now I begin to run
She cannot be far away

Four
Why at my age
Did I perch in that crotch?
Did that tree teach me to sing?
Did it teach me to slither?
Suddenly I had an audience
Three ladies mooning and a black policeman

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Five
There are inky fingermarks
In "The London Shakespeare"
There is a trail of them
Through "Exploring Poetry" and "The Act of Creation"
There is a geological hammer
With an inky handle
And the typescript of a novel
In the green chair
The wedding-ring is in bed already
Snoring, the right road home
Printed across the books.

Six
The cat rubs his tom-bottom
On the mould under the thin leaves,
Last year's rose-leaves,
He prepares for Spring.
The first condition of the ghost
Is that it returns.

Seven
Deep in the found night
At the window of dreams
The thriving greenhouse
Of the lost day's orchids.

Eight
I like that wet lady in the muslin
Who catches fishes that can breathe water
And men who cannot.

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ERIC A. HAVELOCK

The Aeneid and Its Translators

Readers of Virgil's epic who have completed the first book, as they turn the page, will encounter the following lines—

Conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant
inde toro pater Aeneas sic orsus ab alto:

A hush fell on them all. Their faces turned and watched and waited.
And then, from couch above them, Aeneas the father rose up and began:

As a starter for a fresh book this syntax is exceptional. The subject of the first sentence, indicated in *omnes,* can be understood only in the context of what has directly preceded in the conclusion of Book I, and, as *inde* indicates, the sequence is paratactic; there is no chronological break. Elsewhere throughout the poem transitions from book to book are marked by a shift of subject or scene or by temporal intervals. In contrast, it would appear that the poet's conception of the first two requires them to be read as a single narrative, viewed formally speaking as continuous. We are invited to cross the bridge between them without arresting our attention or lifting our eyes from the page. Yet these are indeed separate books. Their contents are disparate and could not well be more so. If it was Virgil's poetic intention that they be read together, it was surely also that his reader should match them in his mind, one against the other, in a relationship which is contradictory.

Let us recall what has gone before. The occasion to which these lines are addressed has been one of serene and studied elegance, a reception at Dido's opulent court. Life is very good just now for the Trojan exiles. They have been moving within a supportive and secure framework put together by the poet in a series of accumulating episodes, which occupy three quarters of the first book. The shipwreck had not after all turned out to be a disaster,

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and can now be forgotten. Jupiter, reassuring Venus on behalf of her son, has reaffirmed in grandiloquent language the historical Roman destiny, and it is easy to see how once he has spoken his piece, the graceful events which follow have helped to color our general estimate of the *Aeneid* as a smooth and civilized piece of work. To Aeneas, exploring the countryside, there appears Venus in the guise of a girl huntress: "Have you seen the maids of my company?" she asks. "No, but who are you: Diana, surely, or some goddess?" She prettily refuses such high compliments but rejoins with the story of Queen Dido. "And now tell me your story." "Ah," he replies, "it would take too long, but we are the Trojans, and I am Aeneas." Before he can develop the theme of his troubles, Venus interrupts his plaint with assurances that all will be well in the end and then transforms herself by an act of glowing transfiguration, a goddess indeed, who taking leave of him is translated to her shrine in Paphos.

This idyll is succeeded by another. Aeneas, with his faithful Achates, concealed in a cloud, ascends a slope and comes in view of the city of Carthage before him, a busy scene, prototype of a Hellenistic city-state under construction, with its streets, public buildings, theater, harbor, council chamber. It is a view he envies. These people have their city; his is not yet built. Central to the city plan is the temple of Juno, splendidly adorned with the work of artists, sculptors and the like. Among the reliefs—or are they frescoes?—he discerns a portrayal of scenes from the Trojan War, his own war, and is greatly moved, but also comforted by the spectacle, which he, as a visiting tourist, is only too well equipped to appreciate. He realizes that his fame has preceded him.

Enter Dido, at line 496, for whom the poet supplies a dazzling description. She occupies her throne and administers justice to her people. Aeneas scarcely has time to appreciate this vision, perceived from his concealment, when at once, with enormous relief, he observes a second spectacle, namely the arrival of the main body of his expedition. Concealed in his cloud, he can only listen to them as they beg sanctuary of the queen in a dignified speech.

Dido replies with welcome and hospitality. "Would that Aeneas were himself here"—whereupon the concealing cloud dramatically dissolves. Aeneas is revealed transfigured, effulgent, the

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very acme of knighthood, chivalry and grace. Hero and queen exchange compliments.

The gracious sequence continues. The Trojans having now been formally received are invited to play the role of guests at a lavish banquet. Venus is there, but just off-stage, arranging for her own pretty boy to supplant temporarily the young son of Aeneas—are they not in fact both her progeny?—while the son is taken to Venus' bosom and translated to a bed of flowers. Cupid, after embracing Aeneas, nestles in the bosom of Dido, inflaming her with passion for the resplendent hero and effacing the poignant memory of her previous husband.

The evening's entertainment is prolonged. The opulent scene is spread out before us with a wealth of detail: tables couches coverlets gold plate and jewels, glittering lights, pages and servants, food and drink. As the pretty boy is being petted and fondled on Dido's bosom, the poet interrupts with a brief warning: she is a doomed woman; a presentiment which only heightens by contrast the security of a scene of which it forms no part. The royal minstrel sings a story which began when the world began and chants the serene motions of the mysterious heavens, the earth and the sea and the sky. It is an epic of the cosmos and of the human race as it was before the present epoch. The applause which greets it is general. Conversation, led by Dido, turns to the topic of the famous men and events of the war itself. The guests respond to the eager questions: Yes, they were there. Like soldiers returning home from the wars, they can now romanticize a conflict which the *Iliad* has already made famous. It is all so relaxed and dignified, brilliant and beautiful.

"And now, gracious guest," says the queen, bending her regal and ardent glance upon our hero, "let us hear another story, told also from the beginning—*your* story." Audience and reader alike are invited to await a third epic to crown the evening's pleasure, a Roman *Odyssey* from the visitor's own lips.

At this expectant point the reader turning the page is brought up short with the sudden realization that, if response is to be made to the queen's invitation, it will not be in the nature of an entertainment.

Conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant. 1

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inde toro pater Aeneas sic orsus ab alto:	2
"Infandum, regina, iubes renovare dolorem,	3
Troianas ut opes et lamentabile regnum	4
eruerint Danai, quaeque ipse miserrima vidi	5
et quorum pars magni fui. quis talia fando	6
Myrmidonum Dolopumve aut duri miles Ulixi	7
temperet a lacrimis? et iam nox umida caelo	8
praecipitat suadentque cadentia sidera somnos.	9
sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros	10
et breviter Troiae supremum audire laborem,	11
quamquam animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit,	12
incipiam.	13

A hush fell on them all. Their faces turned and watched and waited.	1
And then, from couch above them, Aeneas the father rose up and began:	2
"Untold and untellable, o Queen, is the agony you bid me resurrect	3
The tale of Troy, its wealth, its power—weeping and great lamentation—	4
extirpated by the Greeks: things of calamity my own eyes saw	5
and whereof I myself have become a great part. In telling such a tale	6
Could even any Myrmidon or one of Ulysses' fighting men	7
refrain from shedding tears? Now it is the hour when dewy night from sky	8
to earth descendent sinks and the persuasive stars setting invite to sleep and dreams	9
And yet if passion so urgent is this to seek knowledge of our disasters,	10
To hear a short tale of Troy's last supreme travail—	11
I tell you—mind recoils from the horror of the memory of it and has run in fright from its grief.—	12
So be it: I will begin.	13

No interruption could be more startling, no shift of tone and temper more complete. It is as though the opulence and ease of Dido's own court in which the speaker is a guest are by his words

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shattered and destroyed by the same catastrophe that has overtaken Troy. The effect is achieved by the employment of poetic resources which deserve some notice. With the pronunciation of the first line all previous talk and motion is arrested by the use of five words, consisting of three verbs, one pronoun and one noun. These comprise a single hexameter; meter and sense coincide and conspire to stop the previous action. Each of the verbs is intensified: the first by its prefix and by being given the task of abruptly opening the statement; the second, a participle, by being placed in a context which can exploit its double meaning of physical movement in a given direction and mental attention that accompanies the movement; the third, by being given its special kind of object, not a thing held in the hand, but a face held in a given position. We are to imagine a brief, tense interval, marked by the deliberate *inde*, until the father of his country, distanced from the audience by his elevated seat, rising begins to speak. This action is separated from what precedes and what follows by its containment within a second single hexameter. There is a second momentary pause, alike for reader and for the listening audience. The words that then proceed from Aeneas' mouth sound forth a knell which fills up a third complete hexameter opened by two tolling spondees and closed by an echo that dies away in *dolorem*. They state the existence of a profound personal tragedy. Then, as narrative is undertaken in the fourth line, the sentence is run over into the fifth. But the enjambement is only apparent. This time two tolling spondaic words are used to conclude the hexameter and we are forced to pause once more over the spectacle of the world weeping for a lost civilization. It is not merely lost, but has been razed from the earth's face. The intensified verb is once more set to fall like an axe upon line 5 at its beginning and the syntax then completes itself to coincide with the caesura in line 6, once more placing a full stop to what has been said.

The tale to be told, so Aeneas has just said, is not a mere act of recollection, but a reawakening of pain (line 3). The device of using him as a narrator is Homeric, but what Aeneas is going to do is not repeat a narrative so much as relive an inner experience. Nor in that experience is he able to revive or realize his own performance as an agent in the external world. His role is to

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expose a vision of events of which he has been a spectator. Where have these taken place? Where are they now taking place? Four Latin words supply the answer. "I have become a great part of them." Aeneas does not say, as his translators would have him say, I "played," or "took," or "performed," a great part: he does not even say, "I shared in them." He says in effect, "I am them," or at least "many of them." The verb *to be* is in the completed perfect. The phrase could be reversed: if he has become partly identical with what has happened, so what has happened has become part of him. "I am a part of all that I have met." On the lips of Tennyson's Ulysses, this declaration of self-involvment was assured and purposeful. For Aeneas it revives a nightmare which he would put away from him if he could.

The hour is late; the pleasures of entertainment have been prolonged. Cannot we now listen to night's gentle voice inviting us to sleep and to dream? The noun *somnos* carries both meanings and both are intended for it is dreams that can give response to persuasion. "But you say you must have knowledge of what happened to us? You must?" The knowledge for which Dido has conceived such passion is a knowledge of disaster: the three words jostle each other in Virgil's hexameter (line 10). Her *amor*, like the Eros of the Greeks, is no ordinary desire, but a very dangerous thing. Did not the Sibyl in a later crisis warn Aeneas in the same words at the gate of the Underworld: "Is your passion so strong, your greed so great, twice to behold the darkness of death?" (VI, 133). "You know not what you ask," is what in effect the Sibyl was to say to him, and here he is saying the same thing to Dido. For her to desire to share in his disastrous memory means a dark and dangerous involvement, and by the time his narrative ends, she is indeed involved. The agony of Book 4 will be her counterpart to the agonies recalled and related in Book 2. No wonder that to share and to sympathize in what he is going to say is dangerous. No wonder if it is to kindle not only passion, but confusion, pain and despair in the consciousness of her who has listened. For what he is going to share with her, as he explicitly warns her, is not that narrative of adventures that she had asked for, but an exposure of his own consciousness, his *animus* (line 12), as it has been pursued by demons of horror and destruction, which it has tried to put behind it and away from itself, and from which

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it still recoils, for they are better repressed or ignored. The weight of the warning and the intensity of the exposure are carried in three self-containing hexameters (lines 10-12). Their deliberate movement, rhythm and sense pausing together, enforces the finality of what he is saying to her.

In this act of poetic disruption we encounter a phenomenon which recurs throughout the *Aeneid,* not by accident but as a constituent element deliberately included in the composition. If it is removed from perception, we fail to understand the poem's full intentions. In the present instance, a series of poetic statements which have built up an atmosphere of calm and security, nourished by luxurious setting and elegant behavior, are, as it were, deliberately undercut by the intrusion of statements of a quite opposite character. Nor in the present case is it merely a matter of a transition from Dido's court to the destruction of Troy, a passage from one spectacle to another. A calm surface previously prepared is suddenly and deliberately disrupted by the upthrust of an experience which is psychological. The shift, that is to say, from bright light to the colors of gloom, is also a shift from the description of events occurring in the external world, the world of action and movement and consciously articulated speech, to the internal world of the human consciousness. A change in levels of poetic description has occurred. The poet's verse has taken a plunge downward below the surface of the conscious life. It is not for nothing that it occurred to Aeneas to observe that the time has come to sleep and dream.

Thirty years ago, in a little noticed article in the *Partisan Review,* F. W. Dupee took some note of the depth of this psychic dimension in the epic: "What chiefly comes through to a modern reader," he said, "is the frank riotousness of his sensibility and the urgent nature of his unconscious life . . . Virgil seems positively to exult in images of panic and destruction: storms, shipwrecks, meteors, people shrieking and sweating and swooning, Troy burning, women running mad."

At the time when written, these critical observations were unique. In the intervening years, scholars and translators have turned to Virgil with increasing attention, but aside from two penetrating articles by Adam Parry and Wendell Clausen, they have continued to refrain from coming to terms with what Dupee

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called "a highly emotional and emotive poem." The imagist school of interpretation, now much in fashion, as if anything reinforced an understanding of the surface of the *Aeneid* at the expense of what lies underneath, since that is what images tend to do anyway. And by playing a game of detection which seeks to link image to image across pages of text in complex and often fanciful patterns, the practitioners of this kind of critique do nothing to weaken the perception that the poem moves in a world of "dignity, reason and order" (words that I borrow from T. S. Eliot), and that the hallmarks of its style are "rich harmony, smooth, swift rushing freedom, full periodic movement, poise, swell and cadence"—this being the judgment of J. W. MacKail, whose prose version in the Modern Library is probably still the trot most widely used in the classroom.

My present purpose is addressed to the way in which the psychological dimension is so often inserted into the poem discontinuously by way of that kind of interruption which has the effect of reversing or cancelling with poetic rudeness a mood of security and relaxation, or of confidence and hope, into which the reader has been seduced, as it were, by previous description. On the whole, interpreters and translators of the poem have taken their cue from the first, and sought as far as possible to make the second conform to what they regard as the normative ethos of the poem. So the reversal or cancellation is glossed over, being not so much translated as paraphrased, to avoid a confrontation between the two passages. This preference for stylistic smoothness in translation results, whether consciously or not, in a view of the *Aeneid* which plays down the extravagancies of its sensibility, or places them behind a protective screen so that our view of them becomes denatured. But the *Aeneid*, let me remark parenthetically, is not a poem for schoolboys. What this may suggest is that a correct critique of Virgil's intentions depends upon a care in translation in depth which the poem has not normally received.

Consider the poetic equipment brought into play in the composition of the passage under examination. Verbs are intensified by metrical position: words are required to perform two meanings by careful arrangement of context: verbs and nouns are assigned an extra connotation by contact with a neighbor: thus, to "maintain" a gaze is not just to "hold" an object, to "revive"

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pain is not a mere act of renovation, a "passion" for acquaintance with disaster is not an ordinary desire, it is the "phantoms of sleep" that respond to "persuasion"; the placing of long syllable words to enforce emotional profundity—*infandum regina,* and *et lamentabile regnum*—and of short syllable words, regardless of metrical value, to suggest emotional violence, disturbance or instability, as in *animus meminisse horret*; the steady coincidence of sense with hexameter rhythm in lines 1-3 and 10-12 to allow the gravity of separate statements to register in their full implication, and the use of the caesura break in lines 5 and 6 for the same purpose. Finally, a simplicity of sentence structure which is closest to the paratactic, for the subordinate conjunctions *ut, si,* and *quamquam* respectively introduce statements which have an independence of their own. This is the very reverse of that "complexity of sentence and period structure" which Eliot in his essay, "What is a Classic?", attributes to a classic poem like the *Aeneid* as an essential characteristic. His judgment comports with the canons of rhetorical composition as they have been applied to the *Aeneid* ever since later antiquity, but they are ill-designed to explain a great deal of Virgil's text.

It can be said in defense of translators that their difficulties can be viewed as an extension of the poet's own difficulties. The language of literary Latin, as it has come down to us, is not particularly rich in emotive vocabulary. Latin is able to be precise, as few tongues are, because it leaves out so much. Add to this the mechanical fact that the hexameter meter prohibits the poet from using any word which in ordinary pronounciation enclosed a single short syllable between two longs. Virgil's diction is perforce too economical for what he wants to say. He therefore deliberately seeks to enlarge its associative capacity by linkages, positioning, rhythmic manipulations, and the like, using one word to help another and deliberately extending the range of what, by logical standards, is ambiguity. As the complete artist, he uses the very limitations of his verbal medium to enrich the quality of his statement. But this can only mean that a single-word translation of his verse becomes inept.

With the decline of Latin as the *lingua franca* of Europe, translations of the *Aeneid* into national vernaculars became a requirement during the Renaissance, and several of them, in

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Italian and French, had appeared by the time when Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, undertook the first one in English. (He was preceded by the Scots version of Gavin Douglas, of which more anon.) Restricting himself to Books 2 and 4, in a version published somewhere around 1540, he began Book 2 as follows:

> They whisted all, with fixed face attent,
> When prince Aeneas from the royal seat
> Thus gan to speak. O Quene, it is thy wil,
> I shold renew a woe can not be told:
> How that the Grekes did spoile, and ouerthrow
> The Phrygian wealth, and wailful realm of Troy,
> Those ruthfull things that I my self beheld,
> And whereof no small part fel to my share.
> Which to expresse, who could refraine from teres?
> What Myrmidon? Or yet what Dolopes?
> What stern Ulysses waged soldiar?
> And loe moist night now from the welkin falles,
> And sterres declining counsel vs to rest.
> But sins so great is thy delight to here
> Of our mishaps, and Troyes last decay:
> Though to record the same my minde abhorres,
> And plaint eschues: yet thus wil I begyn.

These lines have an historical interest. Their appearance introduces blank verse into the English language, a medium since become so common that it is difficult to realize that it had to be invented, even if suggested by an Italian model. Let us consider some things which Surrey's version in this particular instance has done to the Latin. It has merits which for present purposes I shall ignore. By treating Book 2 as a separate work, his version has divorced itself from the previous context and thereby from any sensitivity to the interruption that has occurred. Accordingly, his first line presents us with an audience settling down comfortably to a recital. The distinction made in the Latin between three separate motions marked by three separate verbs, the silence, the turning of the faces, the fixed gaze, is lost by the artifice of subordinating the second and third to the first: the situation is, so to speak, smoothed over. The bell-toll of *infandum*

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is lost, partly by giving the *iubes* of the original, that is, the queen's command, a translation and a place in the line which exaggerates its importance. In the original it remains very unemphatic in order to reserve all weight for the untellable grief. The similar bell-toll in the phrase *et lamentabile regnum* is lost in the rather innocuous rendering, "wailful realm" as though "wailful" were an ornamental epithet rather than itself a poetic statement. When he comes to the crucial *pars magna fui*, he compromises: "no small part fell to my share," vaguely indicates that Aeneas took active part in the events but entirely misses his identification with them: the phrase "no small" sounds like modest boasting appropriate to the heroic model that Surrey has in mind. The next five lines are surely unexceptionable, which is no accident since they are translating a rhetorical trope followed by an image operating in the world of nature. But as Virgil's verse begins to trend upon the borders of the consciousness, Surrey has difficulty following him. *Amor* is not 'delight'; elegance has been substituted for a dangerous intensity: 'last decay' is again decorous where *supremum laborem* is vehement. If the last two lines, on the other hand, can be said to carry some of the force of the original, it is not without significance that their phraseology is borrowed from the more intense version of Douglas. The sense of the completed perfect is lost, and in substituting 'plaint' for Douglas' 'murnand,' Surrey replaces raw sensation by controlled and conventional response.

A modern critic justly observes that Surrey "strove to create a style appropriate to his lofty material . . . he consciously endeavoured to create a heroic style and form." That is to say, translation begins with a preconception of what the style of the *Aeneid* is or should be. In the case of Latin the model for literary epic was commonly supposed to be rhetorical. Only sonorous diction and periodic structure could be adequate to the elevation supposed to be peculiar to the epic. The rhetorical practice of the Latin historians only reinforced this opinion. Was not the *Aeneid* a history in verse? Surrey's modern editor Florence H. Ridley concludes that the choice of blank verse in place of the rhymed couplet used by Douglas brought him closer to the genius of the original because of its continuity: poetic statements did not have to coincide with line length: "Occasionally he even suggests a

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correspondence between the movement of the verse and the action that it describes." What requires to be reproduced is "the sinuous sweep of Virgilian statement": Surrey "is better able to achieve something of the sweep of the Latin verse." It will be observed that such objectives are inapplicable to the passage we have been scrutinizing. Not action, but reflection, and not sinuous sweep, but interruption and arrest, constitute the genius of the lines. The diction does not breathe a spirit of dignity, but of emotional turbulence. Following the preconception of what the flow of an epic style should be, Surrey's choice of words disguises the contradiction to Book 1 and removes the force of the interruption. In sum, the effective intrusion of violent emotion is mitigated: the translator restores to the passage that smooth surface which the poet had disturbed.

The practice of mitigation of Virgil's diction, and therefore of his sensibility, already visible in the first English Renassiance version, largely explains how Virgil has come to be regarded as a model of decorum. The *Aeneid* has been confined in a rhetorical strait-jacket. To turn to Dryden's version, the one still most admired as the "classic" rendering of the poem, is to see this practice at is most extreme:

> All were attentive to the godlike man
> When from his lofty couch he thus began:
> "Great queen, what you command me to relate
> Renews the sad remembrance of our fate:
> An empire from its old foundations rent,
> And ev'ry woe the Trojans underwent;
> A peopled city made a desart place;
> All that I saw, and part of which I was:
> Not ev'n the hardest of our foes could hear,
> Nor stern Ulysses tell without a tear.
> And now the latter watch of wasting night,
> And setting stars, to kindly rest invite;
> But, since you take such int'rest in our woe,
> And Troy's disastrous end desire to know,
> I will restrain my tears, and briefly tell
> What in our last and fatal night befell.

Virgil's first line is effectively destroyed by omitting two of the

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three physical motions therein stated. To a single decorous adjective "attentive" is allotted the burden of conveying that tense movement of all faces towards the speaker as they wait. The burden is too much for it. The thronged banquet hall has been replaced by an audience at a poetry-reading. To reinforce the decor, "father Aeneas" is translated as "godlike man," thus transforming the raised couch into a throne occupied by a presiding god. For Aeneas' opening words, Dryden's version shows sensitivity. He discerns that the weight of the Latin lines calls for an equivalence of two English verses, and he recognizes in *renovare* an act of internal recollection. But what has been done with the deep knell sounded in *infandum*, and its noun *dolorem*, which together contain the line? *Infandum* vanishes; in its place we have a gratuitous addition: the queen is equipped with the decorous adjective "great" and the still living memory of agony is replaced by a regretful resignation. Grief within is externalized and becomes a "fate" without. When Dryden reaches the crucial statement of Aeneas' own identification with what he has seen, he translates *fui* accurately. But the force of the original is nevertheless toned down by omitting the emphasis on "I myself" and the notion of depth in the adjective *magnam*, a great part. The sense of inner involvement has been dissipated. The four following lines, evoking as they do what goes on in the external world, are transferrable into eloquent English: it is Virgil's eloquence that most successfully emerges in most English versions. But alas, confronting the desperate and despairing overtones of the last three lines, Dryden once more relapses into decorum. Dido's dangerous urgency to share a dark experience has turned into a gracious willingness to receive information. As for the horror of Aeneas' memory, and his instinctive recoil from it, they have vanished altogether.

Modern versions of the *Aeneid* have recently multiplied, seeking to cope afresh with the original within the terms of the problem as it is laid down by C. Day Lewis: "Though there is seldom any insuperable difficulty about putting into English what Virgil meant, it is all but impossible to convey how he said it." The severe qualification that I would add would be this: that the "how he said it" if not carefully attended to will alter the "what he meant." The two cannot be disentangled. I select, as

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recent English versions, that of Lewis himself, and two by Americans, Rolfe Humphries and Maurice Mandelbaum. All three have earned critical acclaim. How do they approach our passage?

Lewis:

All fell silent now, and their faces were all attention
When from his place of honor Aeneas began to speak:—
Oh queen, the griefs you bid me reopen are inexpressible—
The tale of Troy, a rich and a most tragic empire
Erased by the Greeks; most piteous events I saw with my own eyes
And played no minor part in. What Myrmidon or Thessalian,
What soldier of fell Ulysses could talk about such events
And keep from tears? Besides the dewy night drops fast
From heaven, and the declining stars invite to sleep.
But if you want so much to know what happened to us
And hear in brief a recital of Troy's last agony,
Although the memory makes me shudder and shrink from its sadness,
I will attempt it.

No version known to me comes nearer to reproducing the impact of this particular passage. The affective force of Virgil's diction has been sympathetically understood. Two of the three motions in the arresting first line have been rendered in their separate effect: only the double force of *intenti* has been reduced. The reopening of grief, the rich and most tragic empire erased, the memory that makes the speaker shudder and shrink—all these reach down into the psychological dimensions of the Latin. But it is to be noted that even in Lewis' version Aeneas has "played no minor part." The revelation of psychic identification has been missed through mistranslation and the "no minor" phraseology reproduces the modest boasting of Surrey's version, so out of key with the Latin. Dido's fatal passion to know, to have knowledge, becomes reduced to the passive measure of "You want so much to know." *Luctus*, the grief bewailed, the *murnand* of Douglas' version, is tempered to the measure of a wistful sadness, and the consciousness of Aeneas, separately stated in the Latin as that which flies before memory, is omitted. In short, mitigation of effect is at work even here.

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Humphries:

> They all were silent, watching. From his couch
> Aeneas spoke: "A terrible grief, o queen,
> You bid me live again, how Troy went down
> Before the Greeks, her wealth, her pitiful kingdom,
> Sorrowful things I saw myself, wherein
> I had my share and more. Even Ulysses,
> Even his toughest soldiery might grieve
> At such a story. And the hour is late
> Already; night is sliding down the sky
> And setting stars urge slumber. But if you long
> To learn our downfall, to hear the final chapter
> Of Troy, no matter how I shrink, remembering,
> And turn away in grief, let me begin it.

In this version, the original has been effectively destroyed by the use of enjambement precisely where Virgil has taken pains to avoid it, in the three opening lines and the three terminal ones. The result is to supply continuity, rapidity, harmony and epic flow in place of interruption and jarring discontinuity. In keeping with this objective the arresting verbs of the first line have been removed, as has the isolation of Aeneas from the audience. The profound knell of *lamentabile* becomes merely "pitiful"; the superlative of *miserrima* is reduced to "sorrowful"; Aeneas becomes a heroic agent who boastfully says he has had his share and more: Dido's passion to know becomes a sentimental longing: the consciousness of Aeneas is deleted and its panicked retreat before pursuing memory becomes a decorous turning-away in grief. As the force of interruption is avoided, so also is the depth of psychological disclosure.

Mandelbaum:

> A sudden silence fell on all of them,
> their eyes were turned, intent on him. And father
> Aeneas, from his high couch then began:
> oh Queen—too terrible for tongues the pain
> you ask me to renew, the tale of how
> the Danaans could destroy the wealth of Troy,

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that kindom of lament: for I myself
saw these sad things: I took large part in them.
What Myrmidon or what Dolopian,
what soldier even of the harsh Ulysses,
could keep from tears in telling such a story?
But now damp night hurries from the sky
into the sea; the falling stars persuade
to sleep. But if you long so much to learn
our suffering, to hear in brief the final
calamity of Troy—although my mind,
recoils in grief, and trembles
I shall try.

The translator has detected the intensity of the original and sought to transfer it to English with considerable success. The three verbs of the opening line are all allowed to register even though "were turned" rather than just "turned" removes the motion implicit in the Latin participle. The knell-like spondees of *infandum* and *lamentabile* find their echo in "too terrible for tongues" and "kingdom of lament." The whole passage reads eloquently and terminates effectively in "I shall try," catching the note of desperate reluctance in the narrator's voice. But its very eloquence helps to mask the emotional depth of the original. Aeneas' self-involvement is again mistranslated into active participation—"I took large part," and so the things seen become merely "sad". Though the mind of Aeneas is given its own role, that role is mitigated: in the Latin it recoils horrifically from memory—had fled frantically from grief's pursuit: both are acts of attempted separation; his consciousness is appalled at the idea of reviving the story. In Mandelbaum's English this effect is lost, transmuted into a milder expression of merely concomitant emotion. But the major act of mitigation is performed as in the previous example by the use of enjambement precisely where Virgil avoided it. No longer do the six lines, the first three and the last, fall like strokes of an axe across the page. A preconception of epic continuity has prevailed to smooth over an arresting heaviness of rhythm, employed by Virgil to mark an abrupt descent of the mind to a level below previously expressed experience.

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Book 2, being a continuous narrative of disaster rising to a crescendo, offers no opportunity for a recurrence of this particular kind of poetic dislocation, until the tale of Troy's destruction is ended. But the phenomenon has already become perceptible within the first book. The first instance of its introduces Aeneas in person to the reader. A dangerous storm has struck the fleet. Its commander is now suddenly and brutally exposed to us in a state of physical and moral collapse:

The heavens crashed as the lightning flashed and
  crackled across the sky. 90
All elements offered to our heroes the imminent
  prospect of death. 91
In an instant Aeneas' limbs freeze and collapse. 92
He wails aloud, and extending to the stars his two hands 93
Gives tongue as follows: "O thrice and four times fortunate 94
They to whose lot it fell to go to death before their parents' eyes 95
Beneath Troy's high battlements. Hail thou, most valiant
  of the Greek race 96
Diomede! Why could I not have gone down before you
  in the Trojan plain 97
And spilled out this life of mine above your sword-hand? 98
There where fierce Hector lies laid low by Achilles' spear,
  where mighty 99
Sarpedon, where Simois has seized and snatched its prey
  beneath the waves— 100
All those shields of men and helmets and courageous
  corpses rolling over and over!" 101
As he thus screamed aloud a howling gale struck head on . . . 102

No death wish ever found more violent expression. In the parallel Homeric episode, Odysseus, lone voyager on a frail raft beset by tempests, angrily exclaims that he is going to be drowned at sea rather than buried with due honors on land. Aeneas is admiral of a fleet which relies on its commander's morale. In this crisis he hasn't any. His suicidal terrors are the more terribly illuminated by the apostrophe to his enemies whom he would welcome as friends. In his vision how sweet is the thought of going to meet death, to allow them to accomplish it for him, to

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become a sacrificial victim, and manage it in what was to a Roman the most tragic of all situations, dying prematurely before surviving parents. In similar fashion, when about to narrate the fall of Troy, he had invoked the sympathy of his enemies. No hero this. As he speaks, his fantasy increases: dead Hector and Sarpedon and the river's grisly prey are still there, immediate to his vision, shifted to the present tense.

Ninety lines earlier the epic had got underway with that sonorous and confident announcement, so familiar to the common reader: "Arms and the man I sing"—a deliberate reminiscence of the heroic ethos of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* respectively. The epic continues by telling us that this man is to undertake the majestic task of laying the historical foundations of the Roman Empire. He may not be an Achilles or an Odysseus, but his destiny, though different from theirs, is if anything nobler and certainly more grandiose. "How," exclaims the poet, "could heaven in the person of Juno have undertaken to afflict a hero of such renown and such piety?"

But when the poet first chooses to present Aeneas to us in person, this preface to his poem is deliberately undercut. We are prepared for the emergence of a great man, burdened and beset, no doubt, but never in danger of losing our respect. The interruption of this expectation is shocking, and the poet knows it. Twice over he uses formulas which call attention to the utterance: this is what Aeneas really said. A dimension is revealed, not merely of Aeneas but of the *Aeneid* itself, which usually escapes notice in the handbooks. How do our translators come to terms with this phenomenon?

Dryden:

> Struck with unusual fright, the Trojan chief
> With lifted hands and eyes invokes relief;
> And, "Thrice and four times happy those," he cried,
> "That under Ilian walls before their parents died!
> Tydides, bravest of the Grecian train!
> Why could not I by that strong arm be slain
> And lie by noble Hector on the plain,
> Or great Sarpedon, in those bloody fields
> Where Simois rolls the bodies and the shields

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Of heroes, whose dismember'd hands yet bear
The dart aloft, and clench the pointed spear!"
Thus while the pious prince his fate bewails
Fierce Boreas drove against his flying sails.

This is not so much translation or even paraphrase, as substitution. A half-demented human being is replaced by a pious hero for whom every excuse must be made and whose suicidal phantasy must be converted into heroic affirmation. In the Latin his physical collapse is immediate and automatic, marked by the emphatic adverb *extemplo*, "in an instant." Dryden, omitting the adverb, translates it into a mere "fright" which, he adds, is "unusual," as indeed would be required by the canons of epic that Dryden is following. In fact, he had seen fit, in the preface to his translation, to defend the conduct of Aeneas in this very passage. He here carries the defense into his translation. Aeneas becomes not just Aeneas, but the "Trojan chief"; his disordered cries are translated into a purposeful appeal for relief. His death wish, nostalgically projected backwards into the scenes he had left behind, is converted into an aspiration for a gallant end in combat. Dryden has to supply "those bloody fields" to flesh out this conception. As for the image of the river grasping the pieces of equipment severed from their erstwhile owners and also the "courageous corpses," which like the equipment become mere objects tossing and turning in the careless current—here Dryden carries out an act of transfiguration: are they not still in death implausibly holding their weapons aloft? No bowdlerization of Virgil could be more complete, or more Christian. Finally, to make his intentions quite clear, Dryden converts this distraught figure screaming into the wind into a "pious prince" bewailing his fate, thus restoring to the passage that personality which had been assigned in the opening of the epic, and so finally eliminating the effect of the interruption. The heroic surface of the poem having just cracked a little, Dryden hastily repairs it.

The more literal habit of modern translators forbids them to make those kinds of additions to the text that Dryden viewed as required. But the desire to mitigate this Virgilian exposure is still evident.

Lewis:

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And everything is threatening the instant death of men.
At once a mortal chill went through Aeneas and sapped him.
He groaned, and stretching out his two hands towards the stars
Uttered these words, "O thrice and four times blessed you
Whose luck it was to fall before your fathers' eyes
Under Troy's battlements! O Diomede the bravest
Of the Greek kind, why could I not have fallen to death
On Ilium's plain and shed my soul upon your sword
Fallen where Hector lies whom Achilles slew and tall
Sarpedon fell, and Simois our river rolled so many
Helmets and shields and heroes together down its stream?

Like Dryden, Lewis prefers to disguise Aeneas' physical collapse, converting it into a mysterious mortal chill for which he does not seem to be responsible for it went through him like a depressive drug, thus sapping a constitution previously presumed to be sound. The reiteration of "fall," "fallen," "fallen," "fell," wipes out Virgil's verbs of defeat and death fatalistically accepted, supplying instead the suggestion of a heroic end encountered in physical combat. The phrase "shed my soul" suggests an almost spiritual suicide. While the river Simois in Virgil's verse becomes a Scylla that seizes its prey, Lewis prefers to domesticate her as "our Simois" bringing her into the family, as it were, so that the submerged corpses that share the same fate as the pieces of equipment can become heroes rolling downstream. The shift to the present tense is ignored, converting a present nightmare into a heroic memory.

Humphries:

There is no way out but death. Aeneas shudders
In the chill shock and lifts both hands to heaven:
"O happy men, thrice happy, four times happy
Who had the luck to die with their fathers watching
Below the walls of Troy! Ah, Diomedes,
Bravest of Greeks, why could I not have fallen,
Bleeding my life away on plains of Ilium
In our encounter there, where mighty Hector
Went down before Achilles' spear, and huge

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Sarpedon lay in dust, and Simois river
Rolled to the sea so many noble heroes
All drowned in all their armor?" And the gale
Howls from the north, striking the sail head on.

This version, by converting the threat of death into a certainty, can begin by excusing the hero's reaction. The chill shock no longer resides in him, but in the elements. The phantasy of a willing and passive death at Diomedes' hand is redeemed by supplying the Latin with a heroic reminiscence of "our encounter there." Hector's prostrate body "went down" before Achilles' spear, Sarpedon "lay in dust"; these additions are all good heroic stuff and are capped by substituting for the bits of equipment and the helpless naked bodies in the river "so many noble heroes all drowned in all their armor," thus flatly contradicting the original. The effect of present nightmare is again converted into historical narration. As for Virgil's postscript: "these were his screams," it has been dropped altogether.

Mandelbaum:

At once Aeneas' limbs fall slack with chill.
He groans and stretches both hands to the stars.
He calls aloud: "O, three and four times blessed
were those who died before their fathers' eyes
beneath the walls of Troy. Strongest of all
the Danaans, o Diomedes, why
did your right hand not spill my lifeblood, why
did I not fall upon the Ilian fields,
there where ferocious Hector lies, pierced by
Achilles' javelin, where the enormous
Sarpedon now is still, and Simois
has seized and sweeps beneath its waves so many
helmets and shields of men and bodies of the brave!"
Aeneas hurled these words—The hurricane
is howling from the north; it hammers full
against his sails.

This, the most sensitive version, still is touched by what I may

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call the infection of mitigation. Aeneas' prompt collapse is slowed down into a "falling slack," the thought of going to meet death, of falling down before an enemy (the verbs are *oppetere* and *occumbere)* is denatured by the use of the innocuous verbs "died" and "fell." Moreover Virgil had written "Why could I not have gone down before you, and spilled by life's blood under your sword hand?" Aeneas wants to be defeated at once, and bleed afterwards. Mandelbaum, by reversing the order, restores the logic of heroic encounter, but at the cost of disguising the force of the suicidal phantasy. Hector is "pierced," Sarpedon "now is still"; these are heroic supplements to the text, and the harsh spectacle of the military equipment, the erstwhile property of heroes, followed by the courageous corpses rolling over and over in the careless flood, is converted into a sonorous farewell as the river "sweeps" beneath the waves the "bodies of the brave." Appropriately to this conception, Aeneas is represented as challenging the story by "hurling" his words where the Latin participle, jostled by the neighboring participle, describes his shrieks as these are answered by the scream of the gale.

Did the river's indifferent and ignoble treatment of human beings assume a special significance in the consciousness of the hero, or rather of his poet? On a later occasion the image recurs with similar intrusive force, only this time Simois has been replaced by Tiber, a surprising substitution, for Aeneas, now landed in Italy at the estuary of Tiber, the "lovely stream," has received reassurance and guidance from the river god in a vision and in prayer salutes him as ancestral, protective and hallowed. He is then conveyed by water to Evander's rustic Utopia as by a miracle, the river having reversed current to assist his progress. Upon arrival he meets with the supportive hospitality that Tiber had promised him. Pallas, Evander's son, is to join his company and through Evander as an intermediary he is promised powerful military support: all Etruria will join him against the Latins so that the coming contest will be fought on equal terms. To crown this happy occasion Venus sounds a signal from the sky which he at once interprets as a promise to provide him with divine armor. Whereupon he exclaims:

> Woe, for the enormous slaughter impending over the hapless Laurentians.

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Oh Turnus, what pains and penalties will be yours to pay to me! And you, o Father Tiber,
What multitude of shields, of fighting men and helmets and courageous corpses will be yours to roll over and over beneath the flood! (VIII, 537-539)

In the circumstances this utterance is extraordinary. The surface of the Arcadian idyll is violently disrupted. The prospect of martial success and divine assistance is abruptly negated. Aeneas, instead of welcoming the prospect of new armor, and of allies whom he has been seeking, is plunged into despair and in his mind's eye the supportive river turns into a scene of desolation. These words emerge from his inner consciousness, not from the external requirements of the epic narrative. In the four battle pieces with which Virgil completes the military part of his epic, in books 9, 10, 11, and 12, there is never an opportunity for bodies to fall into the Tiber. They are in fact buried on land with formal obsequies, and the climactic contests, when they occur, are nowhere near the river. A nightmare recollection of the past, compulsively intruding upon the hero's initial appearance in book 1, becomes an equally compulsive fantasy of the future as he takes up his assignment in book 8.

On two other occasions in the first book previous affirmative statement is undercut. Their effect is brief and transient, though real enough. One of them gives support to the suggestion already made that what we are dealing with here is the intrusion of something personal to the poet. Venus has complained to Jupiter on behalf of her son's distresses; Jupiter reassures her by enunciating a prophecy which places the present destiny of Aeneas within a historical program leading not merely to the founding of Rome but to the final arrival of a golden age under the emperor Augustus:

Then wars will be laid aside as the savage centuries grow mild.
Antique loyalty and the home and hearth and our ancient saints
Will return to earth again and bring the reign of law.
The awful gates of war, iron bound with bars and bolts
Will close and shut. (I, 291-294)

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The verses use enjambement to link together in close union climactic elements of the poet's vision. The message of reassurance is clenched by three slow terminating spondees: *claudentur belli portae*. Whereupon the secure and soporific rhythm is ruptured by the seven short syllables of three panicky words, difficult to pronounce together: *furor impius intus . . .*

> The fury of wickedness inside, [Virgil means the demon of civil war]
> sitting on top of a savage armament, pinioned behind his back
> by a hundred brazen knots, will howl, a horror, with blood upon his mouth.
>
> (I, 294-6)

The concluding words which I have translated in their Latin order terminate with a second series of five short panicky syllables, *fremet horridus*. It is an extraordinary vision with which to end so calm and confident a prophecy. The beast within is seated on a kind of throne (*super*) composed of a savage weaponry gathered in a heap. He is not quiescent, let alone killed, but only manacled. His enraged and menacing howls will continue to issue from those man-devouring jaws. The tense is future, not present. We watch and wonder: will the bonds hold?

Briefly but drastically the poet has once more undercut previous statement. He has ruptured a previously calm and composed surface and imposed a discontinuity upon his verse by the deliberate manipulation of the resources of diction and rhythm. The possibility of a fresh civil disaster, of internecine war defying the Augustan pacification, continues to haunt him.

The versions offered by our translators are as follows:

Dryden:

> within remains
> Imprison'd Fury, bound in brazen chains;
> High on a trophy rais'd, of useless arms,
> He sits, and threats the world with vain alarms.

Lewis:

> . . . and within, on a heap of armaments, a hundred
> Bronzen knots tying his hands behind him, shall sit
> Growling and bloody-mouthed the godless spirit of Discord.

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Humphries:

War's grim gates will close,
Tight-shut with bars of iron, and inside them
The wickedness of war sits bound and silent,
The red mouth straining and the hands held tight
In fastenings of bronze, a hundred hundred.

Mandelbaum:

within, unholy Rage
shall sit on his ferocious weapons, bound
behind his back by a hundred knots of brass;
he shall groan horribly with bloody lips.

The distortion common to all these versions consists in making the seating of the dragon the principle verb within the image, to which the roaring and gnashing of teeth is appended as subordinate. This is the obvious result of a wish to present him as safely imprisoned and helpless, thus mitigating the force of what is disruptive and dangerous in the image, bringing it into consistency with the secure and serene statements that have preceded. All translators have conspired once more to save Virgil from himself. To make doubly sure, Dryden adds that the fury "remains within," that the arms are "useless," and that the alarms that issue from his mouth are "vain." As in the previous example, this is not so much translation as substitution. Dryden has a thematic conception of the poem's real purpose which allows him to override the original. The modernists follow the same instinct more cautiously. The original had contrived an enjambement more apparent than real, designed to set off groups of words from each other with separate shock effect. Lewis, abandoning line for line translation, substitutes two run-overs which smooth out the statement and leave the animal growling in subdued fashion. Humphries adds that he is silent, in contradiction of the text, and makes sure that the bonds are "held tight," and also squares Virgil's arithmetic to make sure the fastenings will hold. Mandelbaum leaves the animal groaning horribly as if in the pain of imprisonment rather than in a rage untamed and untamable.

I hope the reader has been patient with me in perusing these

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texts. I ask him to believe that they expose a phenomenon recurrent in the poem and, as I have said, fundamental to its composition. Such subtle emendation of the original tells us more about the *Aeneid* on the one hand, and its interpreters on the other, than could be managed in a dozen critical essays. The poem is a work of divided genius. This has been said before, apropos of the Dido episode, but the same observation applies to the epic taken as a whole. It is not just that the introduction to Book 2 is designed to shatter the scene which concludes Book 1. The whole of Book 2 is a denial of the affirmations of Book 1. The reader had initially been told there that Aeneas' tribulations have a purpose—"till he should found a city." He never does. The city that at once confronts us in the twelfth line of the poem is Carthage—*urbs antiqua fuit* (I, 12)—which, as he abandons it in the conclusion of the Dido episode, is prefigured as a city overwhelmed and set on fire by its enemies (IV, 669-671; V, 3-5). The second is Troy which collapses in ashes—*urbs antiqua ruit, multos dominata per annos;* the formula varies, the theme is constant, and when he adds "for many years mistress of the world," he could be talking of Rome herself. He carries both these cities of destruction with him into Italy. As the last battle of the epic rises to its climax, he summons his forces to destroy utterly the capital of the Latins. The city is set on fire (XII, 572-611) and its ultimate fate is, in the poem, left unresolved. Yet these are the people with whom he is supposed to unite his Trojans in a peaceful union in order to achieve a common destiny.

> What is the city over the mountains
> Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
> Falling towers
> Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria
> Vienna, London
> Unreal.

The Wasteland can furnish better comment on the *Aeneid* than is found in Mr. Eliot's essays on the same subject. The role that he assigns to Virgil's poem in the history of our culture is that of a classic which "has a critical sense of the past, a confidence in the present, and no conscious doubt of the future." This re-

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flects a determination to ignore much that the poem actually says in contradiction of its professed theme; a determination which bespeaks a critical conspiracy with historical roots. Dante's choice of Virgil as his guide was at once a compliment to the Roman epic and an impediment to its true understanding. The *Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost* are epics of affirmation of the Christian faith, whether Catholic or Protestant. The *Aeneid* is nothing of the kind. To read it as a proto-Christian poem is to refuse to read it. Alternatively it can be read as a justification for Roman imperialism, a view which had powerful appeal for European scholarship in the nineteenth century, the age of the White Man's Burden. Did not Aeneas have his own burdens, his imperial duty to perform?

But the particular critical error to which this essay has tried to call attention lies in the field of poetics. It has consisted in an initial misjudgment of the style of the Virgilian verse and therefore of the canons to which its translation should respond. These have been set by the notion that the theme of the poem is historical and that its content is a narrative of epic action. Style of translation must therefore be swift and also smooth. Where the poem is making psychological statements, these should as far as possible be externalized. The theme of the poem is viewed as consistently elevated and majestic, requiring a choice of diction which draws on the resources of rhetoric to achieve either grandeur or elegance: it is a poem in fact in which heroism is to be treated at a civilized level while remaining heroic. Syntax is viewed as contrived and complex, rhythmic and seductive, in the manner of a musical fugue. None of these presumptions are consistent with the whole text as we have it.

To praise a work of art for the wrong reasons is to enfeeble it. To succeed in having these reasons accepted through translation is to destroy its influence. This has been the *Aeneid's* fate. For, while honored, one might say, officially for being the kind of epic it is not, the common reader comes to the poem with expectations supplied by this official view, and finds them falsified. Read as a supposedly great epic, a second Homer, the poem becomes a great bore. So we observe the paradox that while the poem is misread by the orthodox who applaud it for the wrong reasons, their opponents on the left wing of criticism accept

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the same evaluation of the poem and go on to reject it as a failure. Friend and foe alike draw on common assumptions about the poet's style and are using a common mistranslation of it.

The paradox is powerfully illustrated in an attack levelled against the *Aeneid* some years ago by Robert Graves. His assault on what he called the Virgil cult was total. "Few poets have brought such discredit as Virgil on their sacred calling. And in saying this I do not merely contradict Mr. Eliot; I contradict the whole line of Virgilians from Propertius to Augustine, from Augustine to Dante, from Dante to Dryden, and from Dryden to Alfred Lord Tennyson who survived into Mr. Eliot's childhood. Poetry demands independence of spirit, originality of thought, integrity of expression, contempt of popular fame and, above all, capacity for true love and for all the wilder human emotions that thwarted love excites."

It is with this flourish of trumpets that his article in the *Virginia Quarterly* concludes. It will be realized that the character whom Graves appears to be describing bears considerable resemblance to the Aeneas of our translators. The real trouble with Mr. Graves's Virgil is that he was read by him in school and apparently not reread since, at least not with attention, for he launches his attack on the poet as apologist for Augustan imperialism by quoting, appropriately enough, from that prophecy of Jupiter in the first book already noted:

For this people I propose no bounds to power nor temporal limit. Their assignment is perpetual empire.

This, we are told by Mr. Graves, is uttered by Aeneas' father Anchises in Book 6. A minor slip you will say, but wait. One passage of the *Aeneid* chosen as the target of his critical arrows is the very one with which our own analysis has begun. Here is how Mr. Graves translates the first line, "They kept silence and being attentive held their mouths. . . ."

"Reading it again," says Graves, "after a lapse of fifty years, I seem to be back in my classroom at Charterhouse, teasing gentle old Tommy Page: 'who all kept silent, Sir? and why write the same thing in two different ways? . . . Yes, sir, I know—the notes say that *all* means Dido's courtiers, but why doesn't Virgil?' "

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If the young Graves wanted to learn Latin, and this reminiscence, with what follows, for there is more of the same, reports a genuine conversation with his Latin teacher, I can only surmise that he went to the wrong school. He commits two solecisms in a single sentence. The continuity between the ending of Book 1 and the opening of Book 2 is, as we have seen, grammatically unbroken, in which case the reference in *omnes* to Dido's courtiers becomes too obvious to require comment. Graves's Latin class, we infer, for good or ill had been assigned only Book 2. It is even possible to guess why. Were not the books of the *Aeneid* available, each in unique isolation from the others, in that handy little series of elementary classics with blue covers, equipped with vocabulary, issued by the MacMillan Company, as the title page stated, "for the use of schools" and edited, if my recollection serves, by that same T. E. Page who was trying to teach Graves Latin?

To gain acquaintance with the context of the passage he is translating would thus have required Graves to buy a second text which, presumably, was not included in the class assignment. This at least would explain his previous failure to recognize a quotation from it. Aside from context, he has some trouble with vocabulary. He knows that *os* means a mouth, but the equally common meaning of "face" which is established in Plautus does not occur to him, so he is unable to make much of *intenti,* "they turned and watched," though his mistake does give him a chance to display his acquaintance with technical terminology by suggesting a hendiadys where none exists. Finally he tells us that *conticuere,* "they all fell silent," has to begin the line because the poet wishes to avoid placing *conticuerunt* at the end of it, or, rather, to be fair, he ascribes this piece of ingenuity to his teacher, Mr. T. E. Page himself, who must have been something of a leg-puller. Graves's Latin class does not sound very advanced. It was surely the Lower Fifth, not the Upper Sixth, which was selected to be the target of such humor.

Proceeding on his way Graves dismisses as meaningless rhetoric a line and a half which he translates as follows:

> Now damp night precipitates itself from the sky
> And the descending stars encourage sleep.

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Literal enough, you will say, and why expend effort to catch the sense of partnership between the darkened sweep of the heavens and the onset of the human dream? Graves is no Shelley and probably does not want to be one. "Does the word *praecipitat,*" he asks, with a touch of his own rhetoric, "mean that night is falling or does it, as in Cicero and Ovid, mean that night is drawing to its close. The context will not help us."

Oh, yes it will. The poet has already been explicit on this point. Dido's party has already been underway some time. The poet had described how

> lighted lamps hang down from the fretted roof of gold
> And the flaming torches drive out the night. (I, 726-7)

A little later, just to make sure, we discover Dido "prolonging the night in various talk." But these lines occur in the first book. To become acquainted with them would have required Graves to purchase that extra text. If I cite his error it is to point out the unfortunate consequences for proper critical appreciation which follow from a failure to perceive that the first and the second books are composed to be read continuously, so that the dislocation of mood carried out as Book 2 opens can register its proper effect. Virgil needs criticism, but it need not be supported by such ineptitudes as these. Yet I do not think they are altogether Mr. Graves's fault. The poetic text that is being attacked is not Virgil's, but that image of the text of Virgil projected by neo-classicism.

Concealed behind this image is the epic as Virgil wrote it, a human document of considerable psychological complexity. There is a kind of controlled despair which moves in and out of the poem like the play of shadows reflected in a running stream. Yet the current flows steady, guided by the persistent melody of his verse. It is to be admitted that he is not the poet of youth, of energy, of generous emotion which does not count the cost. He is not, if I may say so, a very American poet, in the traditional sense of "American." The world which he reports is already old and its inhabitants are living in a time of trouble. His Latin deserves to be read with an attention close enough to recapture for this generation a view of reality imprisoned in his

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verse which is more complex and also more contemporary than at first appears. If, in the contradictions of his tale, success is so often flawed by doubt and security so often undercut by hate, terror or despair, this need not surprise us. We encounter an experience closer, I dare say, to our own ambiguous image of ourselves in this the second half of the twentieth century than we are likely to discover in the clearer light and simpler affirmations of the Homeric saga. When Homer lived and sang, the world was younger and the gods still walked the earth with men.

I gave earlier indication that in considering how Virgil may be translated, the first translator in the British Isles should have his due. This was Gavin Douglas, the "poet-bishop," son of the fifth earl of Angus, and uncle of the sixth who married the widowed queen Margaret of Scotland. Surrey, attempting his own renaissance version, clearly had before him Douglas' manuscript, and Douglas can be given the last word. Here is his Scots version of the crucial lines in the passages I have reviewed:

II, 1: Thai ceissit all at anis incontinent,
With mowthis clois, and visage takand tent.
Prince Eneas, frome the hie bed, with that,
Into his seige riall quhar he sat,
Begouth and said: Thi desyir, lady, is
Renewing of ontellable sorow, I wis,
To schaw how Grekis did spuilye and destroy
The greit riches and lamentable realm of Troy,
And huge misery quhilk I thair beheld,
Quharof myself ane greit part bair and feld;

II, 12: Albeit my spreit abhorris, and doith grise
Thairon for to ramembir, and oft sise
Murnand eschewis thairfra with greit diseis,
Yit than I sall begyne yow for to pleis.

I, 92: Belive Eneas memberis schuik for cauld,
And murnand baith his handis wp did hald
Towart the sternis, with peteous voce thus can say;
O sevin tymes full happy and blist war thai,

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Vndir hie wallis of Troy, be dynt of swerd,
Deit in thair faderis sicht, bitand the erd!
O thou of Grekis mast forcy Diomeid,
Quhy mycht I nocht on fieldis of Troy haue deid,
And by thi richt hand yowdin furth my spreit?
Quhar that the vailyeand Hector lowsit the sweit
On Achillis speir, and gryslie Sarpedone,
And vnder the fluide Simois mony one
Witht scheild and helme stalwart bodyis lyis warpit.

I, 294: With hard yrne baundis claspit fast in caige,
Of wickeit bargane therin the furious raige
Set apon grisely armour in his seit,
And with ane hundreth brasin chenyeis greit
Behind his bak hard bund his handis tway,
The horrible tirrant with bludy mouth sall bray.

The Scotsman got it right every time—the specific harshness and sheer despair of the Latin—where his successors, renaissance, neo-classic and modern, fudged it. More than that, perceiving the necessary linkage between Dido's artless request for a tale, and the hero's desolate reply, Douglas arranged his own version so as to place at the end of Book One the lines with which Virgil chose to open Book Two.

Addressing Virgil, he had described the principles of his own poetics as follows:

And that thi facund sentence mycht be song
In our langage als weill as Latyne tong . . .
I wald into my rurale wigar gros,
Write sum savoring of thi Eneados . . .
Kepand na sudroun bot our awin langage,
And speikis as I lernit quhen I was page.

But adherence to the common speech of his countrymen does not go quite far enough to explain an ability to penetrate to the marrow of Virgil's verse. Douglas was a Celt; it is permissible to suppose that the author of the *Aeneid* was also a Celt. Both poets

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grew up in times when civil anarchy and private insecurity were facts of life. Douglas finished his translation, when still a young man, in the year of the battle of Flodden

> where shivered was fair Scotland's spear,
> and broken was her shield.

His father the earl had sought in vain to dissuade James the Fourth from an enterprise which wiped out the flower of Scottish chivalry, and left his queen a widow. It is an incidental irony of literary history that the Earl of Surrey who inflicted this defeat was the grandfather of the man who, composing the first English version of the *Aeneid,* was to turn to Douglas for his exemplar.

It is a plausible guess that the conditions of his age and the temper of the times helped to put Douglas in touch with the insecurities concealed in Virgil's verse. One can stand today in an embrasure of Telford's bridge above the river Tay at the gateway to the Highlands, and look across to the remains of Dunkeld Cathedral standing by the river bank. Within the ruined nave lies a brutal effigy of an armed warrior, reputedly the Wolf of Badenoch, that "ravisher of cities." This was the bishopric which his scholarship no less than his family connections had finally won for Douglas. He had spent a year in prison before he got it, and, as a result of the disorders that continued to surround the regency of the queen, it was taken away from him before he died. For Scotland and Scottish society the time of pacification had not yet come. One day the gates of war would begin to close upon "the horrible tirrant," still "braying" within, but for this historical process to be set in motion, Scotland had to wait for the accession of her own Augustus, in the unlikely person of James the Sixth of Scotland and First of the United Kingdom. That was over eighty years after Douglas had died.

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DAVID BROMIGE

To the Limit

1

The loathsome thing has kissed
& I have woken. I am married
to my death. What happiness

I knew in dreaming's
broken open, no act
I undertake is single

now. No thought
that doesn't darken
in this doubleness I didn't choose

but grew to see was true,
that my parents had given me away
at birth. I am talking so

since no way out is left to me.
Maybe I hope, the way that talk leads
back, to find once more

the means to sleep. I think
I pricked my finger & the pin
like any pain, was token

to tell how vulnerable I was
in being flesh, & being so,
at that I fell asleep. To dream

nothing but a life, mine,
as we mortals like to call it,
& such delight I had of it

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I dreamed somehow its span
went on & on, its future
somehow as its past, yet

mysteriously better. I learned
by various mistakes
but more by what went right

so that the dream seemed
reasonable, & that hope
did help, I loved, my love

returned, I didn't think it
an adultery. Now
how can I pay back what my love

with me, spent helplessly—
what of it remains? This
fact I find I'm wedded to

can't reclaim what, in its grasp,
seems lost. I must
submit, I see

for my own self's sake, with grace,
since submit I must,
for I do not worship pain.

Perhaps this pretty
poetry I mean to make
may make my peace with

fate? It's late,
later than I thought,
I want to sleep—

I want to think death
tolerable, since death
colors all my thought. I think

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to lull him with my
yielding till he nods so I
may slip away. I'll

steal the pin he wears
to hurt me with & meet
my mortal love once more

as we met before, as if
in dreams, so brave
& open in our ignorance

we were—though
no cause to tell of this,
talk's cheap, those

who live as we did
alone'll follow me.
But some impulse keeps me talking

fitfully—why
do I want to isolate it,
why is it so difficult?

All living things must die.
Fruit ripens & drops off the vine.
Energy can never be destroyed.

It seems the dream talks on,
simply to be its evidence
& solitary witness—

as if the kiss had only partially
dispelled *its* power
the lips attempt to shake it off,

the lips that kissed, or were
kissed, which is it? What vow
truly to remember

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shows me words
absolving me so
this becomes that dream

no thought of death
—a night-nurse shaking
anxiously her charge—

can break? that time
won't bear me on from
to an evening all these words

can't protect against
the presence of the thing
that gave them life.

2

This is that mode
which makes us slaves
more subtly than force or torture can—

this apparition of a voice
& self-effacing craft
together can suggest

you have the choice—
nobody's saying what you have to do,
these phrases placed just so

enact a confidence
that must be yours
since now you are alone,

they might mean variously
one of several messages that you,
decoding, thus disclose:

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the agency of that decoding
must be also, you.
Presuming on a native curiosity,

they lead you on—
you, a life whose singularity
rejects those times before you were,

alive now in this language
lifted from the dead,
whose deaths together form

a further message, Live
now, as we
did not, not fully, not

enough, in our own time.
The voices
stop. Having said

never any more than
that was what they knew,
they would. The rest is

dreams, to us, who are
awake. Vivid
being dreamed, fragmented

& fading in the day—
we know better, pausing
to see where this has brought us.

I think, one says, that death
as it possesses thought
impels us into slaveries;

that anyone who sells us
means to look away from that
fact, can thus exact

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the tribute of our thought.
In brotherhoods transcending death
see the frustrated need return,

Valpurgis of a Thousand Years—
I think this process
has gone on long enough.

Maybe the words themselves,
these close accomplices of liars,
bear the blame. Or syntax

an affliction of the brain
has crazed us
in its orderings

bent upon some end.
Such resistance
brings one courage

without which, who
could face a death
this dream of courage says

obliterates the dreamer
while he or she still lives.
In abject terror,

as old records show,
the human, as its legs,
that panic drove, give out

always has then fallen,
prostrate, to lie
weeping, on the ground.

No means, without a god,
to get onto your knees
& then get up. You

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can't live on your knees.
Though in that posture life
passes itself on

as the sentences of chromosomes
begin to wake up death again
& all its wild conceivings—

that death will fix. The words
will not stay fixed, but go on
making meanings

beyond what one had thought to mean,
who could blame you
if you let them be? Writing

will make slaves of us,
in various ways, will
generate more meanings

than the truth we need
can need, I die, you
go on, alone—imperative

given this is true, to be
free, since, given this, each
already is, you

free to die away from
me, as I, from you—free
too, to face such freedom as

we choose, you
it may be in a dream I
cannot tell, I

in a dream of telling why
such dreaming needs to be, that truth
I am the slave of saves from me.

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MICHAEL BENEDIKT

Translations from Max Jacob

The Seasons

SPRINGTIME'S THE VERY bushelbasket of love.

In the chateau of Balmoral, on the banks of the Dee, I had seen Spain's greatest figures drunken with springtime on the footbridges. I suppose that perhaps the Dalai Lama must be sensitive to the soft tufts of springtime; as for me, I only see springtime through a telescope, a microscope. I've lost everything. I seek God in winter.

Down with such sourpusses, say the velvety bears of summer. Is it to be believed that people in the south are living a balmy summery existence even as we endure the snow? O all-conquering, poisonous sun, you transform the wisest men in Toulouse into incurable troubadours. What an orthodoxy!—this is its basic tenet: All Flesh is But Solar Mesh. After all, there's a reason why the cheeks of adolescent girls are always compared to pears. O sun! Delivery-van for the factories of the sky. But as for me, I only see summer through a telescope, a microscope. I've lost everything. I seek God in winter.

So let's go to the snows! let's plunge into the prideful height itself. Let's take us off to the slipping, skidding and sliding of the poles.

"As long as you stay in your room, do you hear?"

"At least let me lift the curtains a little."

"If you dare stir from that chair you'll risk an even worse cold."

*

"Let me see once again that marvelous young woman. When I draw back the curtain she is there, attracting me as might some magnet. Her bare feet are plunged into snow the way King Henry's were at Canossa. A crown of wheat sparkles in her bright blonde hair. With the hands of a milliner smoothing down a hairdo come undone, she forms an elegant crown of thorns in the shape of my skull: 'It's for you!' "

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The Balcony of Romeo and Juliet

What a balcony! It's the band-shell in the park where they play military music! Oh! How well I know that flautist for the military symphony! I also knew Eugenie, the doctor's nursemaid. One Sunday the military concert featured "Selections from William Tell, opera." In the midst of the silence arose the barcarolle: "Dark Forests," and the flautist played his solo and the music filled all the summer air. The trees on Mount Frugy bent down to listen. The trees in the lanes of Loc Maria lifted themselves toward heaven. The flautist of the military symphony was more than dedicated, he was inspired! In his flute this barcarolle from William Tell became a declaration of love for the doctor's nursemaid. And the doctor's nursemaid realized it! She clutched the little hands left in her care, hard, against her childish knees; she beheld the transports of the orchestra. The nightingale's song! the song of the lark! the song of a love that is shared.

The ring of listeners broke up. The crowd strolled away.

Twenty years later, I happened to run across the flautist: "I remember that our company left that very same evening for manoeuvres! By the time I returned to camp, she had left town! And I never even spoke to her, never even once."

To the Pilgrims of Emmaus

I don't know who was there: but it was in one of those bistros where my youth disappeared. A white marble table stood in the place where the traditional mirror meets the wall before turning the corner and then going on some more. I was wearing a worn derby hat and my face was questioning the terrible eye of God (it was Him! He somewhat resembled St. John the Baptist, but it was Him nevertheless). "Since you are God and You know all things, tell me when this war will be over!" and I added ". . . and who's going to be the winner." "So you think I'm going to speak to you so you can play the prophet in salons?" He fell silent. Night fell. No drink was on the table.

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Death

The body frozen solid in the morgue of this world . . . who will breathe life back into it, so it may properly exit?

The mountain of bodies in this morgue is piled high upon my own body . . . who will separate it from this life so it may properly exit?

Like a cloud of bees, eyes swarm forth, eyes like those of Argos or else the lamb of the Apocalypse.

The cloud has just settled on the morgue which is my own body. Space, do you hear, make space for the gentle arrival of Our Lord!

In short, the body is simply a swift sketch; and the eyes of that cloud have already vanished as well.

Remaining, is barely a slice of beefsteak, a splatter of blood, and a few marble fragments to recall a name now already forgotten.

The Troubled Soul May Remake the Whole of Heaven

I have seen the Lord beneath the waters of a river. The river was transparent. His drapings were of dark cloth but they were neither wetted nor stained. A shadowy seashell in my hands, a shell with pearls. . . . What's the significance of this symbol? and you, sleeping naiad, aren't you representative of my soul? Yes, my soul is languid as this naiad! When it awakens, the Lord's long robe becomes covered over with arabesques; the Lord turns, turns again like some swimmer and His Eyes deign to fall on mine there on that riverbank. Oh, does that mean You're reviving Celestial Nature, to reflect the growth of my soul? The peaceful ranks of waves beneath the trees of Paradise bubbled upon the sand. The shell shone softly in my hand and I noticed that the pearls were becoming ruby-red.

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GRACE SCHULMAN

Man of Two Worlds

TWO BOOKS COMPOSED IN THE nineteen-sixties but not published here in English translation until 1973, both bodying forth the essential poetics of Octavio Paz, bear the impact of the author's residence in India. Although Paz began writing *Alternating Current (Corriente alterna)* in 1958, it did not appear in Mexico until 1964; and although the first edition of *The Bow and the Lyre (El arco y la lira)* was published in 1956, it is the second edition, of 1967, on which the English version is based.[1] During their composition, Octavio Paz served for six years as Ambassador to India, where he was profoundly affected by Eastern thought, especially the Buddhist current of Nagarjuna and his commentators. At once solitary poet and man of the contemporary world, Octavio Paz resigned his post in 1968, after the democratic movement in Mexico, led by the students, was abruptly ended with the massacre of several hundred peaceful demonstrators. In Delhi on October 3, a few months after the slaughter that took place during the Olympics, Paz wrote "Mexico: 1968 Olympiad." In that poem, he makes real horror more terrifying by presenting it in dream-like images:

La verguenza es ira
Vuelta contra uno mismo:
Si
Una nacion entera se averguenza
Es león que se agazapa
Para saltar.
(Los empleados
Municipales lavan la sangre
En la Plaza de los Sacrificios.)

[1] ALTERNATING CURRENT, by *Octavio Paz*. Translated by Helen R. Lane. Viking. $7.95. THE BOW AND THE LYRE, by *Octavio Paz*. Translated by Ruth L. C. Simms. University of Texas. $8.50.

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Shame is anger
Turned against oneself:
If
An entire nation is shamed
It is a lion crouched
To spring.
(Municipal employees
Are washing blood away
In the Plaza de los Sacrificios.)[2]

Octavio Paz is a living incarnation of those tensions in modern poetry between human commitment and aesthetic concern, a dialectic that is fundamental to the art of all nations. And his poetics is important, for it places the poet at the heart of modern life, singing his solitary song in company with the massed voices of human solitude. In his view, the poet does not speak the language of society but turns away from it, gaining strength in exile.

In our time poets, pressed to a keen awareness of human misery, have worked toward an austere art. At an extreme, poets who are acutely conscious of modern horror have subordinated the music of poetry to argument and sacrificed the personal vision that informs their art. Since around 1925, a reaction against individuality, as well as against rhetorical devices, has grown more severe with each generation. Often it appears as if the greater an artist's revulsion from destruction, the stronger is his reluctance to indulge his personal perceptions.

In fact, the Renaissance concept of the individual has dwindled in that modern poetry of which Hopkins, Whitman and Baudelaire were progenitors. The lack of inner wholeness as he perceived it led the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) to write in four voices, naming each one individually (his own name means person). And after around 1945, consciousness of brutality became so acute, especially in European writers, that poetry of the person, however divided, was considered an impossible indulgence. The poet who reports the world in crisis writes of inner fragmentation as well as outward disaster, and often retreats into silence under the pressure of that disruption.

Despite his acquaintance with suffering, however, Octavio Paz has a vision of personal integrity. He maintains that the artist,

[2] Unless they are quoted from English editions, translations are mine—G. S.

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rebuffed by a community that would substitute technological priorities for spiritual growth, transcends those social limitations and ransoms his dying world. What is more, Paz believes that political crisis nourishes great literature, although the people may not be aware of a poet's genius at the time he is writing. And that is natural, for poetry, with its plurality of meanings, seldom is read for what the words convey: the works of St. John of the Cross, for example, were read originally for their exemplary value, rather than for their beauty.

Even in times of crisis, Octavio Paz asserts, poetry lives on the deepest levels of being, while ideology constitutes superficial layers of consciousness. His faith in the power of language to reveal truth makes him affirm that poetry renews daily life and creates meaning in the present. Just as Confucius was said to have called for the reform of language when asked what he would do to administer his country, Paz believes that the poet who is committed to his art rebuilds empires.

Unending emphasis is laid by Octavio Paz on the poet's power to resuscitate a lifeless world. Paz feels that the poet finds a sacred knowledge by confronting his deepest feelings in the practice of his art. In that encounter, he perceives unity in a universe that had appeared fragmented: *"el día y la noche reconciliados fluyen como un río manso"* ("the day and the night flow in reconciliation like a gentle river"). By seizing the truth revealed to him in the present moment, he knows that all faces are one face and centuries are confined to an instant: *"no hay nada frente a mí, sólo un instante/rescatado esta noche"* ("there is nothing in front of me, only an instant/recovered tonight").

That sense of unity is the result of a dramatic change in his poetics that took place three decades ago. In an essay entitled "Poetry and the Reader," Ruth Needleman writes that in the nineteen-thirties and forties, Paz had stressed the importance of drawing the reader into a creative relation with the poem but that after that, he shifted his attention to the work of art as a self-sufficient reality.[3]

Earlier in his life, the Mexican poet had been attracted to the collective experiments of the French surrealists, and inspired by

[3] In "Octavio Paz Symposium" of *Books Abroad: An International Literary Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Autumn 1972), pp. 550-551.

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Lautréamont's prediction that eventually poetry would be written by everyone. In the nineteen-sixties, though, Paz places his faith in the poet's inventive genius, rather than on the size of his audience.

Between the collectivist leanings of his youth and the spiritual vision of his later years, the poet's life followed a dialectic pattern that is, curiously, analogous to the lives or poetic roles of other Western writers. At an extreme, Baudelaire wavered between aristocratic and revolutionary positions, while Rilke shifted continually between the personae of nobleman and outcast. In the case of Octavio Paz, various political and literary influences molded his thought: Siding with the Republicans in civil war Spain, he felt revolutionary in spirit but came to distrust revolutionary theories. After a short stay in Paris, Paz returned to Mexico in 1938, where he wrote about international politics for *El Popular*, a union newspaper. Then, breaking with the communists, he withdrew from political activity at the time of the Munich pact. During World War II, Paz met Leonora Carrington and other surrealist artists who found refuge in Mexico. And after the war, he met André Breton and Benjamin Péret in Paris and discovered in his own response to surrealism a liberating vitality that recalled his attractions to Blake, Novalis and Hölderlin. For, according to the tenets of surrealism, the poet's imagination, cleansed in the fire of the creative act, had the sacred power to rescue the contemporary world.

For all his divagation, these works of the nineteen-fifties and sixties read like the testimony of a man who has witnessed the destruction of all images and then found in the resurrection of those images a creative, sustaining force. In *Alternating Current,* a collection of short essays, and in *The Bow and the Lyre,* a treatise on aesthetics, Paz describes a poetic universe that transcends a world he knows well. Vacillating between patriotism and rebellion, wavering between political activity and artistic solitude, Paz found in pure art the preserving strength of our world. It was as though he had found stars at the bottom of hell.

If Paz envisions an art that goes beyond contraries, he allows that it normally moves between two poles which he calls the magical and the revolutionary. In *The Bow and the Lyre,* he says that the magical extreme consists of a desire to return to the

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natural world, "to sink forever into animal innocence or to free oneself from the weight of history." The revolutionary endeavor, on the other hand, requires a recovery of the alienated consciousness. And although his poetry is alive with a constant dialectical tension between the magical and the revolutionary aims, the impulse that commands his art is the drive to surpass those poles.

The poetics of Octavio Paz is built on his belief in pure time, to which the poet has access. Where calendar time, the rhythm that governs daily life, attaches an end to days and years, mythical time creates life: "The mythical date arrives if a series of circumstances combine to reproduce the event," Paz writes in *The Bow and the Lyre,* and tells of one of the ancient rites of fire, in which the Valley of Mexico, submerged in shadow, suddenly glows in firelight from the Hill of the Star. The poetry of Paz incarnates this view of time: In *"Vida Entrevista"* ("Glimpse of Life"), an early poem, he cries: *"Oh mundo, todo es noche/y la vida es relampago"* ("Oh world, all is night,/life is a lightning-flash"). In a later poem, *Piedra de Sol (Sun Stone),* the poet as believer, dejected by year's end, seeking a still point in the present, wanders through the city to find a vision of time's incarnation.

By the process of rhythmic repetition, the poem invokes the myth that returns to begin a new cycle. Octavio Paz believes that language, like the universe, is generated by rhythms that manage separation and union, harmony and discord. That double rhythm is the scaffolding of most cultures, he says: just as the ancient Chinese saw the universe as the cyclical combination of Yin and Yang that form the Tao, the Greeks conceived the cosmos as a struggle and fusion of opposites. And his conjecture recalls that modern poetry is heir to William Blake's union of antinomies in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* as well as to the truth of his assertion: "Without Contraries is no progression."

Although he had embraced contraries from the beginning of his writing career, the Mexican Ambassador to India found in Tantric thought and in Hindu religious life dualities that enforced his conviction that history turns on reciprocal rhythms. In *Alternating Current,* he writes that the Hindu gods, creators or destroyers according to their name and region, manifest contradiction. "Duality," he says, "a basic feature of Tantrism, permeates all of Hindu religious life: male and female, pure and impure,

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left and right. . . . In Eastern thought, these opposites can co-exist; in Western philosophy, they disappear for the worst reasons: far from being resolved into a higher synthesis, they cancel each other out, due to a gradual deterioration of values."

In fact, the title, *Alternating Current,* refers to those opposites the poet contains either in joy or in anguish: language and silence, solitude and communion, fall and resurrection. The image, of an electric flow that reverses its direction at regular intervals, suggests the galvanic excitement that oscillating rhythms can generate in art.

"Another art is dawning," Paz declares, and predicts that poetry's departure from the linear time of modern progress will be even more radical than the change that two centuries ago altered the Christian notion of a motionless eternity. The art he foresees will be based on a concept of time that recurs, as in ritual, and on a present that incorporates the past and future. Paz writes that the new poetry was inaugurated by Apollinaire, who juxtaposed different spaces within a single poem, and by Eliot and Pound, who used texts from other times and languages in their works. Paz calls the rising poetry an "art of conjugation"; he sees the artist as one who exists in a state of blessed confusion, for he holds in his mind other eras, languages and continents.

Paz assumes that the modern "ritual" of hallucinogenic drugs implies a severe criticism of our world's linear time. When people use drugs, he speculates, they perceive the wholeness of life and death, the unity of men and women. Their sensibilities altered, they see the absence of frontiers between people and nations. But Paz feels that the drug experience—like meditation, fasting and ascetic discipline—is a false road to the spiritual oneness that poetry provides. He maintains that the total surrender required by Buddhism and Tantrism is only analogous to the dedication poetry demands. For the poet actually creates new life, making the day begin again and compressing all time into an instant, knowing

lo que pasó no fue pero está siendo
y silenciosamente desemboca
en otro instante que se desvanece

what has happened is not past but now exists

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and silently flows
into another instant that vanishes
(*Sun Stone*)

The structure of *Alternating Current* supports its argument that completeness depends upon the rhythmic assertion of contradictory realities. The essays of its framework—prose poems, really—shine like revelations. His blazing prose, though, dwindles in the English translation, and the periodic structure, however integrated with the theme, is not the clearest setting for his luminous ideas.

The Bow and the Lyre, on the other hand, his most comprehensive discourse on poetic theory, is a book to be grateful for. He speaks as a passionate explorer, recalling his remark that the verb *querer,* which means to desire, comes from the Latin *quaerere* and connotes inquiry. Paz wrote that Breton, his friend and mentor during the years in Paris, combined passion with inquiry in his quest for the word. Besides describing all poetic activity, the word *querer* seems to characterize the poetics of Paz, which is at once a programme for poetry and a vital quest for the truth about such disparate things as language, erotic love and political freedom.

In that book, Paz writes that rhythm and imagery reveal the world's unity. While rhythm is an alternating current that moves language and the universe, imagery, which also oscillates between contraries, reconciles disparate meanings without suppressing any. (St. John's "silent music" combines antithetical things as does the tragic heroine, Antigone, who is torn between divine piety and human law.) Like rhythm, imagery comes from primordial time: if rhythm generates new cycles, imagery closes the gap between name and object that was unknown to primitive man.

Because of the unity they provide, the poet has access to a primordial sensibility in which opposites are one, a state reminiscent of Freud's description of the unconscious as a place where antithetical things appear to be the same. This state, though fundamental to art, horrifies Western man. The truth we learn from Paz is that in magical moments—when we see light strike water or watch rock-hollows suck sea—we know that life and death are a totality, not a dilemma.

Paz commits himself to the integrity of all things, and that

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dedication fires his enthusiasm for surrealism and Buddhism. The same energy generates his study of 1967 emphasizing structuralism in art. In *Claude Lévi-Strauss o el nuevo festín de Esopo* (published here as *Claude Lévi-Strauss: An Introduction*),[4] he asserts that so-called "primitive" men were actually rational because they saw man and time flow through one another.

Nor does he feel languages are separable. All languages, he believes, have in common that split between words and the things they signify. If language itself is a translation, then the gap between languages is far less compelling than the distance between names and objects.

The solidarity he believes in supports his great plan to communicate with everyone, regardless of language or culture. "I believe that Western poetry is one," he told Anthony Rudolf in an interview that appeared in *Modern Poetry in Translation* 11.[5] "I believe profoundly in its unity. At the same time I believe in its plurality." The paradox typifies those Buddhist tenets that informed his thought in the nineteen-sixties: poetry, like beauty and life, is whole and yet contains many discordant things. It is idle to simplify its complexity or to deny its totality.

Two volumes of Paz's poetry have appeared recently in English translation. *Early Poems 1935-1955* and *Configurations*[6] cover a thirty-three year evolution and include selections from eleven books, besides three long poems. The two volumes divide almost neatly into the major phases of the poet's activity: *Early Poems* covers the period of surrealist influence; *Configurations,* enclosing the work of the late nineteen-fifties and sixties, is the title given to Paz's innovative work. In *Configurations,* a name signifying the form produced by the relative disposition of parts, meanings emerge from explosive phrases that correspond to a universe that we see in an alternating current, as a whole and as bits of a whole. As novel as this may sound, however, the power of his art lies in his vibrant marriage of opposites— sound and silence, attraction and repulsion—in methods as traditional as Blake's fusion of heaven and hell, or Dante's union of light and dark. And

[4] Translated by J. S. and Maxine Bernstein (Cornell University Press, 1970).

[5] (Autumn 1971), p. 20.

[6] EARLY POEMS 1935-1955. Translated by Muriel Rukeyser and other poets. Indiana University Press. $7.95. New Directions. $2.50, paper. CONFIGURATIONS. Translated by G. Aroul and other poets. New Directions. $2.75, paper.

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although Paz's images of opposition may flow from the alternating rhythms of separation and union he found in the cultures of the world, they suggest very strongly the antinomies found in all great poetry. But then, the most original poetry always tends to draw its newness from conventional means.

It must be said at once that, ironically, inaccuracies of translation are even more apparent in a poetry that transcends language barriers: some glaring instances are, in *Early Poems,* the rendering of *"Vida Entrevista"* as "Live Interval" instead of "Glimpse of Life" (despite the broad hint from the image of a lightning-flash), *"alturas"* as "heavens" rather than "heights," *"una espiga"* as "a sheaf" rather than "an ear."

These are, however, important books. The poetry is at once of Mexico and of the world, moving beyond nations to reach the inner lives of people everywhere. That universality is what the surrealists hoped to achieve when they diminished the role of author and called for the intervention of the unconscious in poetic creation. Paz is a characteristic Mexican. He draws on a rich Aztec heritage and on his American Indian ancestry. If his mind is disciplined by European poetic forms, he envisions the vast empty areas of space that are central to poets born in the Americas. He is one of several Latin-American diplomat-poets: not only Darío and Neruda, but Mexican poet-ambassadors affected him. His countrymen were José Gorostiza, from whom he absorbed techniques for the long poem, and José Juan Tablada, who attracted Paz for the way he fused European forms and haiku to liberate the structures of his poetry.

If the background of his poetry is Mexican, his impulse is to reach outward toward all people. "The poet is the reader of the book of the universe," Paz remarked in an interview with Rita Guibert, referring to a Renaissance metaphor used by romantic poets. "Aesthetic styles and trends transcend nationality and have nothing to do with frontiers. . . . Modern literature is *one,* despite the plurality of languages and traditions. . . . Styles are historic, they have never been exclusively national, and they leap across walls and frontiers. . . . A writer is always a plurality of voices, every language is a plurality of languages."[7]

[7] *Seven Voices: Seven Latin American Writers Talk to Rita Guibert,* translated by Frances Partridge (New York, 1972), pp. 208, 209, 231.

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Paz recited those beliefs when he spoke of his *Renga,* a work named for a Japanese collective poetic form. *Renga* is a sonnet sequence composed in 1969 in four languages by Paz; Charles Tomlinson, an Englishman; Eduardo Sanguineti, an Italian; and Jacques Roubaud, a Frenchman. It is emblematic of his poetry: just as he merged his deepest thoughts with those of foreign poets, his voice is the confluence of many voices.

In the "Prologue" to the early collection, that voice is heard: "Against silence and noise I invent the Word, freedom that invents itself and invents me every day." Like Whitman, Paz uses the self as metaphor to permit discoveries on a deep psychic level, and to merge with others. Just as Whitman creates in *Leaves of Grass* an observer who identifies with every leaf, star and atom, Paz constructs a speaker who sees nature as an organic part of the soul: "I go forward slowly and I people the night with stars, with speech, with the breathing of distant water waiting for me where the dawn appears."

Paz envisions a place that is unfragmented by time, undivided by "what I have been" or "what I will become." In that place

> Beyond ourselves,
> On the frontier of being and becoming,
> a life more alive claims us
> ("Beyond Love")

In contrast, he portrays the modern world as territory where existence is limited by the deadly notion of rectilinear time. Only in radiant moments can wholeness be found: In "Seeds for a Psalm," the poet sees islands "in flames in mid-Pacific" and "the polar night on fire" and knows that love has appeared in an unworthy country, a "land condemned to repeat itself without respite."

The poet is seen as a visionary who focuses his igneous gaze on the world and sees life as alive. De Sade, in "The Prisoner," is addressed in this way:

> Comet whose body is substance, whose tail glitters in dialectics,
> You rush through the nineteenth century holding a grenade of truth,
> exploding as you come to our own time.

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For Paz, poetry is an alchemy whose agents of transmutation are fire and water. In "Object Lesson," those images have a hypnotic, ritual pull: "Facing water, days of fire./Facing fire, days of water." As for "The Broken Waterjar," the poet as open-eyed spectator sees the stars as "bracelets of flaming islands" and knows that "life and death are not opposite worlds, we are one stem with twin flowers." In an enraptured moment the surrealists would have coveted, he finds the universe uncut and no part of the self suppressed.

In fact, the dominating image of his poetry is the mystic oxymoron of burned water. The phrase is glossed in a note to "Return," a late poem[8] that is not included in *Configurations.* He writes:

> *Atl tlachinolli:* burned water—not burning water, as it has been sometimes translated—water in flames, as the "wet flame" of Novalis. The Aztecs, in their wanderings around the lake of Mexico (today an urban desert of saltpeter) saw a bundle floating in the waters. They fished it out and found two wood sticks for making fire. The meaning was *atl tlachinolli:* the marriage of fire and water. This metaphor was the founding stone of Mexico-Tenochtitlan.

In that poem, the speaker returns to a city to find "thoroughfares of scars" and "alleys of living flesh." There

> The signs were broken
> *atl tlachinolli*
> was split
> burned water
> There is no center
> plaza of congregation and consecration
> there is no axis
> the years dispersed

To depict the fallen city, the poet distorts syntax in an approximation of the rotting bond between government and people. The device recalls Dante's breakdown of language to indicate the disruption of social order. In the *Inferno,* which incarnates a vision of godlessness and political discordance, Dante hears Pluto utter *"Pape Satan, Pape Satan, aleppe,"* and hears the souls of the

[8] Published in THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (Spring, 1972).

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Sullen, buried in mire, gurgling a grotesque parody of a hymn.

In these poems, water is transfigured by its relation to fire, as conflicts are resolved in visions of unity. In "Mutra," the poet sees "water of stars and reptiles, water-forests of burnt bodies" and declares "I do not want to be/God, I do not want to grope in the dark, I am a man. . . ." Although the experience is precisely godlike, since the poet has reached a transcendence of contraries, Paz uses it to epitomize manhood.

In *Configurations,* Paz finds his divided world redeemed. The central figure of "Salamander," a transitional poem of the late nineteen-fifties, is an animal and a sacred presence, as well as the mythical creature that can endure fire without harm. The poet sees it as having ambivalent qualities:

> Salamander
> ancient name of fire
> (and ancient
> antidote to fire)

Beholding the changing amphibian, the poet knows that life "does not commence without blood/ Without the embers of sacrifice." The poem rises in a marvelous ritual chant for life and destruction; just as fire nourishes and destroys, the passion of one feeds and kills the other:

> you speak
> as a fountain speaks
> Salamander
> Blade of wheat
> daughter of fire
> spirit of fire
> Condensation of blood
> sublimation of blood
> Salamander of air
> the rock is flame
> the flame is smoke

That blend is a major instance of Paz's reading of the world as a collection of fragments that become more themselves by

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relation to other things. As the title, *Configurations,* indicates, objects assume their real identity in the strucure of the whole: fire becomes fire in its opposition to water; man becomes more himself in his interconnection with another being. In "Signs in Rotation," a section he added in 1965 to *The Bow and the Lyre,* Paz defines the poem as a "vibrant space on which a few signs are projected like an ideogram," and as "fragments that regroup and seek to form a figure, a nucleus of meanings." He asserts that the world has been split apart:

> In antiquity the universe had one form and one center; its movement was governed by a cyclical rhythm . . . The political order and the order of the poem, public festivals and private rites—and even discord and the transgressions of the universal rule—were manifestations of the cosmic rhythm. Later, the figure of the world widened: space became infinite or transfinite; the Platonic year turned into a linear, unending succession; and stars ceased to be the image of cosmic harmony. The center of the world was displaced and God, ideas, and essences disappeared. We were alone.

Because the universe is no longer complete, "space expands and breaks apart," time is disrupted and the self is dissolved. But Paz views that dissolution as a strengthening power, for it causes each fragment to be dependent on other parts.

That sense of otherness is central to *Sun Stone,* Paz's great transitional poem named for the Aztec calendar wheel whose elements, sun and stone, incarnate the unity of life and death. The speaker, the poet on a quest, seeks a day that is alive, a year that does not end in death. In an erotic union, he sees the natural and supernatural worlds combined:

> I am the other when I am myself, my acts
> are more my own when they are everybody's
> because to be myself I must be other,
> go out of myself, seek myself among others,
> those others who are not if I do not exist

To be himself, he calls forth an otherness that has not been allowed to exist: "The world has changed," he cries, "when two people look at each other, recognizing/ to love is to take off our clothes and our names."

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With renewed vision, he sees that the cry of the victim and the cry of the torturer are one:

> they are flames
> the eyes are flames and those who gaze are flaming
> the ear is fire and the fiery music,
> live coal the lips and the tongue firebrand,
> the one who touches and the one who is touching,
> thinker and thought, and the thinker is a fire . . .

Like an ancient fire ritual, *Sun Stone* invokes the myth that reforms the present moment, bringing new energy to earthly things. The land reborn, the poem returns to its beginnings, with identical lines about a river that "advances and retreats, goes roundabout,/ arriving for ever:"

Paz's work of the nineteen-sixties, *Blanco* (1966) and some of the poems in *Ladera Este* (1968), embody his belief that as art moves closer to ritual the artist, who creates in exile, is drawing society to him. "The Balcony" is one of the later poems in which Delhi is used as an image of the modern world. The speaker leans out on a balcony, precariously "nailed/ in the middle of the whirlwind," perceiving the "distance that is so near/ I do not know how to name it." Feeling close to a city that lies like "a violated corpse," he sees that life and death vanish "in the same flashing sea" and knows, in an incandescent moment,

> Over this fragile bridge of words
> The hour lifts me up
> Time suffers from a hunger for incarnation
> Somewhere beyond myself
> I await my arrival. . . .

Blanco, his most ambitious poem, bodies forth a meeting between East and West, language and silence, the self and the other. Those opposites are presented as dialogue that propels the poem forward, leading to an instant of coherence:

> You are naked

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As a syllable
As a flame
An island of flames
Passion of compassionate embers
The world
a bundle of your images
Drowned in music
Your body
Flowing through my body
Seen
Vanished
It makes real the seeing

The poetry of Octavio Paz is an urgent matter because it insists on the wholeness of life, love, and nations, a unity that only art can reveal. And if I have always known that poetry lives on the deepest levels of the world's being, the voice of Octavio Paz commands me to admit the rightness of this knowledge. For Paz sees the world burning, and knows with visionary clarity that opposites are resolved in a place beyond contraries, in a moment of pure vision: in that place, there are no frontiers between men and women, life and death. If his poetry incarnates the mind's journey toward insight, his voyage is my voyage, his passion my passion:

> —tonight is my life, and this single moment
> which never stops opening, never stops revealing
> where my life lay, who I was, what your name is
> and what my own name is. . . .
>
> (*Sun Stone*)

The truth I see darkly in the poetry of Paz is the basic fact of lost unity and "how vulnerable it is/ to be women and men, the glory it is to be man"

> and share our bread and share our sun and our death,
> the dark forgotten marvel of being alive;
>
> to love is to struggle, and if two people kiss
> the world is transformed. . . .
>
> (*Sun Stone*)

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In a world that has more false shamans than true poets, we search for spiritual transcendence and find, all too often, artificial prophets wearing reddish-gray beards and ivory beads, high on mescaline and low on redemptive power. The poetry of Octavio Paz is real, for he has created an image of man going beyond himself. The bow represents man's ability to shoot himself beyond his condition, and the lyre figures forth the place in the cosmos for human endeavor. Although Paz frequently makes original use of imagery from Buddhism and Aztec lore, his true concern is poetry's godlike power. And he makes me say: Of course. I have always known it was so. I believe it also.

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ROBERT NYE

Coral

He was crouched at the pool's edge, chin in hands, looking at her body where she floated through the rooms of the house or stood at the turn of the stair, her thighs like jewels, objects thrusting themselves towards her, growing more distinct in her gaze, birds dashing themselves against the windowpane where she stared out. Rain ran down her breasts.

The sound of the sea was like a piano being played with a sheet over the keyboard and a damp wad of newspaper between the hammers and the strings. Now she was running ribbons through her fingers. The shadows were like scalds. "Finished with you," she said, but it was not clear whether she was addressing him or her embroidery.

They walked together by the sea. Everything in the water was visible: wrecks, peaks, ribs, treasures, crabs, coins, sand, bones, anemones. Above the tideline lying on its side its runners still glistening, they found a sleigh. She sat on it and drummed her heels. He pulled her along: two eccentric furrows in the shingle. Most of the time she seemed to be staring at a bonfire on the other shore. Bits of rusty black paper were being tossed up out of the flames and wafted across the estuary like bats. They crumbled into ash when he touched them with his stick. She was counting waves, comparing them to heartbeats. He collected shells and she promised to listen to them later, but before long she walked away down to the sea's edge, leaving the shells untouched. "Here I am," she said, "here I am, water." Her nipples were as hard as buttons. She pressed her neck as though there was a noose about it.

The storm lasted all afternoon. Fire forked through the sky, they could see it a long way off, everything in the rooms of the house stood out in the fitful light of it. Objects were refined in this light, as though brought out of water. He sat at the piano picking out the first fugue of the *Art of Fugue*. He kept playing the same bit again and again, getting one note wrong each time, but gradually progressing. The music grew like coral through the house. She ignored the effect of the light indoors, standing watching the rain on the verandah. The wind penetrated everywhere, the carpets rose in the long corridors, a door banged. Then, in the evening, the storm was gone. They could see the pool through the branches. Its surface was like steel made blue by fire.

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PETER SERCHUK

Night Song

There were no words.

Just the pie we had left by the fire
for the coons, the half-moon curled
yellow in the sky, a cold breeze sliding
along the side of the warm tent.

Inside, within the goose down bags,
my hands were as dark as the places
they slept in and the deep clean lines
touched more than they could know of.

She whispered something I have now
forgotten; something about dying
in a place where no one would find you,
within the dark woods or white waves.

We loved the night in the changing air
and in the morning woke early to watch
the sun sweep across from tree to tree
lifting the damp from the open leaves.

Bar Harbor: For a Moment by the Water

For a moment, with the lights turned off in the beach house,
you confused the rocking of the cradled water with rhythmic
breathing
and carefully lifted the blankets from my body.

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The room was still as a summer leaf, and only the breeze
through the window moved within, scurrying like a cat
under the bed, under the desk, over the chair.

I lay quiet with my lids shut tight, feeling your cautious eyes
slide over my chest, across my thighs, along my legs,
scanning the dark edges of flesh hair, my only cover.

I did not speak as you touched my side, touched my face,
your warm hand bringing blood to my cheek, resting
like a sparrow on the contour of my forehead.

You became motionless in the intuitive silence, and it was then
that I fell asleep, dazed, thinking how the sun rises slowly
in the morning, pacing itself like a runner above the white
Maine Coast.

And I can touch you now, strangely dropping back to that
same sleep
of silent vertigo, and feel my pulse lead me to objects beyond
my hands, far far removed, barely within reach of my words.

JOHN ENGELS

Halloween

Lying in wait for the egg-throwers,
the neighborhood hoodlums, hidden
in the yard's dark, in the thickets
of the driveway willow, my shadow

from houselight long
over the grass, they invisible
in the cowfield across the street,
likewise hide and wait and cry out

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against my house and do not know
I listen, or hope I do. And I
listen, the narrow yellow of the leaves
whipping my face,

and am crept in upon. The old house
behind me shakes with wind, the dark sky
darkens even more, I sprout
dead yellow leaves,

and the tendrils of my bones lengthen,
twine out, and fix into the grass.
I think I can wait forever, and then
raucous with joy they move, they move

against me, and the egg at the end
of its high invisible and perfect
arc shatters in yellow plasms
on the window glass. They run

away, they have done what they came for.
And I have waited for nothing again, another
year, my boundaries broken, my house smeared.
Come back, you own this house, I cannot

enter where my ignorant sleepers and safe
dreamers in their dark rooms are warm
as cowfields; they call back and forth
between themselves in dreams. I am not

blind or deaf: *you out there,*
you move and imagine you are invisible,
no different from the shadows of the hollows,
grass and hill: I call you in, you

who hunt me, who have
no bed or garden of your own. For you
I will wait forever,
shaking with wind and rage.

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Jules Olitski

OLITSKI'S DECISION TO BECOME A PAINTER—a decision which, like most creative life decisions, seems rather to have made him than to have been made by him—came early, at about the age of thirteen. By the time he was seventeen Olitski had become aware of substantial portions of the western art historical tradition and at the age of eighteen (1940) he was already painting portraits in a Rembrandtesque style. A self-portrait of 1940 is monochrome in effect, tending toward grayed greens, and is organized not around areas of local color but around tonal variations within its limited color range. The near side of the head and a hand holding a brush catch highlights, while the far side of the face and the chest and hair are thrown into deep shadow, standing out thereby against the medium tone of the background. The over-all distribution of the accents recalls similar effects in Rembrandt self-portraits, as does the unspecific background which suggests at once a shallow and an atmospheric space. A portrait of two years later (1942) shows what Olitski learned from Sidney Dickinson, with whom he was then studying at the National Academy of Design in New York. General loosening up is evidenced in the angular, less rigorously delimiting contours and in the heavier impasto and broader brushwork of this later portrait, all characteristics of Dickinson's painting. Less subtle organizationally, the picture offers more coloristically, and plays white highlights in the hair and collar off against black tones in the coat and background, while the carefully modulated flesh tones of the face mediate between the two. All the highlights and most of the color are, thus, concentrated at the center of the canvas.

The center of the canvas and what to do with it was a problem that occupied Olitski for many years. While his natural tendency, as seen in the 1940 self-portrait, seems to have been to de-emphasize the center, his conventional training, abetted perhaps by his respect for the old masters, drew him back to it. The struggles generated by these divergent tendencies, as well as by such problems as the role color was to have in his painting, forced Olitski into a decade of experimentation in this country and in Paris, where he worked around 1952. This experimentation involved an attempt to realize his own artistic personality and to come to grips with—to circumvent if necessary—contemporary residues of old master painting while remaining true to the traditions embodied in the old masters themselves. It was, thus, an essentially protestant effort. By 1951-52 Olitski had reached an uneasy compromise in dealing with the center of the canvas in a group of

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"portraits" of drawing boards that he found discarded in art schools. These pictures reproduce exactly the double nature of their subjects, covered at once with rectangular linear patterns congruent with the boards themselves, traces of the edges of numerous removed drawings, and with a palimpsest of smudged and dripped remains of the oil, ink, or watercolor of those same drawings. The fact that the centers of these paintings—the areas most protected in their models—were largely devoid of incident meant that they were at once emphasized and avoided—emphasized by contrast with the incident-filled borders around them and by the constant delimitation of rectangular linear patterning; avoided because little happened in them pictorially. The drips and scumbled over-paintings of these pictures bring them as close as Olitski ever came to Abstract Expressionist style. It is telling of the range and intensity of Olitski's artistic search at this time that he chose to paint *objets trouvés,* as well as to explore other Surrealist mechanisms, when his native tendency was always toward traditional pictorial methods.

By 1958 Olitski had arrived at the first of the styles which were to gain him general recognition, embodied in paintings of sufficient interest to win him his first one-man show. These sand-textured, heavily impastoed canvases reversed the formats of the drawing board paintings by placing irregular masses of thick paint in or near the centers of their compositions (*Can Can B.C. 1,* 1958). They are most easily understood as descendants of the portraits of the early 1940's not only because their centered images seem related to the centered heads of the earlier pictures, but because those images most often contain the white and/or black value extremes around which the remainders of the compositions are organized. Although monochromatic in appearance, the pictures are not infrequently informed with a flesh tone hidden beneath the gray which functions not so much as a color in itself but as a general warm tonality suffusing all or part of the composition. Their main difference from the portraits, thus, is that they reverse the color structure of the earlier pictures by de-centralizing the flesh tones, thereby de-localizing and unifying the entire composition. It has more than once been proposed that Olitski's experience of the work of Jean Fautrier when he was in France suggested to him some of the pictorial possibilities explored in these works of seven years later. While it is true that Fautrier's painting deals in impastoed central images and a restricted color range, his sensibility is wholly different from Olitski's, being essentially that of a miniaturist interested in the careful manipulation of small-scale form and the precise working of surfaces. One is, rather, tempted to look for the visual context of these pictures in a kind of painting popular and much-exhibited in New York in the late 1950's, that of contemporary Spain. Although Tapies was, and remains, the best-known painter of the school, it is

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the work of Luis Feito that most nearly suggests what Olitski was doing. Heavily-impastoed, largely monochrome, and boldly expressionistic, Feito's painting was often to be seen in group and one-man exhibitions during the years around 1960. As with much European contemporary painting, it was not so obviously divorced from the traditions of older art as American painting, being more conventionally painterly in its methods of application, and it would, thus, have been particularly attractive to a painter aware of those traditions.

During the time Olitski was producing his impastoed pictures of the late 1950's he became aware of quite different artistic developments, and in 1960 that awareness brought about a radical change in the appearance of his pictures. Olitski's first one-man show in 1958 had been noticed by Clement Greenberg and in December of that year, when he became consultant in contemporary art to French and Co., Greenberg included Olitski in a group exhibition, mounting a one-man show of his work there in May, 1959. Among the other artists shown by Greenberg were Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland, then first exploring what has since come to be known as Color Field Painting. In view of the departures in Olitski's painting in 1960 and his subsequent friendship with Noland, one can not doubt that the work of these two men opened new paths to him. Both Noland and Louis were staining raw canvas with thinned acrylic pigment, leaving no evidence of facture and no impasto and identifying color areas completely with the surfaces on which they appeared. Olitski's compositions of 1960 adopted precisely this method of facture, although their configurations were native to Olitski himself. Those configurations were generally elongated, often roughly rectangular, shapes completely contained within the confines of the canvas. Although their irregular contours harked back to the portraits Olitski had painted as a student of Sidney Dickinson, their containment and the general simplicity of their tonal structure seems carried over from the works of the immediately preceding years. By 1961 the shapes in these pictures had become circular, and during the two years Olitski explored round motifs his work came entirely into its own as one of the major artistic statements of its time. As the previous pictures had explored textured effects these explored coloristic effects, and variation in hue replaced monochrome tonal variation as an organizing principle. The brilliant but mixed hues favored by Olitski during these years, particularly an orange, a purple, and a green that he used a great deal, certainly owe something to Louis, while his circular images may well acknowledge the power of the concentric targets that Noland was creating. Both Louis and Noland, however, were to move in the direction of clear separation of colors one from the other (the contemporary equivalent of *local color*), careful delineation of edge resulting in precise linear or geometrical forms, and containment of the image within the canvas.

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Olitski was to move in the opposite direction, toward integration of color (the contemporary equivalent of atmospheric color), abolition of carefully defined forms, and expansion of the image beyond the confines of the canvas.

The first step in this latter development is represented by *House of Orange,* a painting of 1961-62, in which an irregular hollow circle contains three smaller circles. All are placed off-center, the larger circle with respect to the canvas, the smaller with respect to the larger by which they are contained. Each is a different color and the two ground areas, that contained by the large circle and that outside its bounds, are two different colors again. The result is an intricate balancing act in which the tones must be modulated between the dark blue and the light orange of two of the small circles, the shapes manipulated so as to allow just the right amount of each hue, and the hue and value of the large circle must be such as to resist the powerful pressures of the warm hues within and without. Although the picture is an impressive one, its problems are not those most congenial to Olitski's talents and the fact that it is painted out to the edges makes it unnecessarily congested. In *After Five* of 1961 Olitski reduced the number of his hues to three and allowed areas of unpainted canvas to show through, thereby simplifying his composition and allowing it to breathe. The feeling of containment is mitigated by his having painted the field within the circle and that without the same hue, and the circle's potential outward growth is suggested by its being only partially completed in red, the remaining arc being given over to a green shape. From this point there were two directions in which to go. The first, a dead-end for Olitski, is suggested by *Ino Delight* of 1962. Here, the larger circle is pushed beyond the bounds of the canvas and the field, both within and without, left unpainted. The three circles disposed within the canvas are so arranged as to leave the center void, a major advance over pictures with central painted shapes which could not fail but draw attention and recall, however vaguely, the last traces of portraiture and central perspective vanishing points. The weaknesses of such compositions are clearly shown in *Monkey Woman* of 1964, a picture in which the outer circle has been dispensed with altogether and four colored shapes float on an unpainted field. While by no means a failure, *Monkey Woman* does deal almost entirely in issues that are peripheral for Olitski—the careful adjustment of colored shapes seen against a background—and is much too calculated and composed to rank with his finest work.

The second direction is represented by *Chemise* of 1963. Here, the expanding circle of *After Five* has pushed the blue ground off the canvas sufficiently that it is no longer a ground at all but an incomplete circle actively a part of the composition. The jaws of the red-orange inner circle have opened, detaching themselves from the smaller arc, which is red-violet in this case, and its center is painted a fourth color

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altogether—green. The total effect is both more holistic and more expansive than that of *After Five,* and in more apparent sympathy with the tendency of Olitski's talent. Finally, there is the monumental masterpiece of the series, *Born in Snovsk* (1963). Here, both larger circles have pushed off the canvas, the central color area has resolved itself into three different-colored arcs, and the "center"—no longer anywhere near the center but well toward the top of the vertical composition—is left void.

Given the tendency toward integration in Olitski's art and the fact that variation in hue was one of its major organizing principles in the early 1960's, it comes as no surprise that in 1963 large areas of color took over his compositions completely in another radical change in their appearance. In these "windowshade" pictures, generally vertical in format, one color predominates, while others are banished to the edges of the canvas as small shapes or lines punctuating the whole. *Fatal Plunge Lady* (1963) is among the simplest of these pictures, its red-violet curtain leaving only a small corner to be filled with a green arc and purple dot—all colors that had appeared before in Olitski's work (*Chemise*). By 1964, the subsidiary shapes were tending to disperse themselves around all or most of the edges of the canvas and not to be concentrated in one place (*Deep Drag*), and it is in these pictures that one becomes most intensely aware of the problems with which Olitski was wrestling. There was, first, the issue of how to keep a large color area from becoming boring, a problem only partly resolvable by surrounding such an area with smaller patches of contrasting color. One solution was to place contrasting color areas within the field itself (*Flaubert Red,* 1964), but this had the double drawback of re-introducing objects into compositions which tended increasingly to be unified and of creating an unpleasant optical "pop" that came uncomfortably close to being effect for its own sake. Another was to blend colors into one another, changing hue or value from one end of the field to another. This, however, was difficult to manage without the transitional area going dead (*Tin Lizzy Green,* 1964). A second problem, resulting from the fact that the most satisfactory method of applying large areas of thinned paint is to roll them on, was the tendency to create shapes by rolling rectangles congruent to the stretched canvas, allowing the latter to determine the composition rather than be determined by it. Since the direction of Olitski's art was toward abolishing internal shape by expanding it beyond the limits of the canvas, this tendency was clearly counter-productive. Complicating this issue, and raising a third problem, was the natural inclination to introduce shapes into any areas remaining between such a rolled field and the edges of the canvas (*Tin Lizzy Green*). If these shapes were small dots or areas, as in *Deep Drag,* they might be harmless to the composition, but when they became lines brushed in along the edges they could further constrain already constricted canvases. It has generally been

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observed that such drawing is crucial to Olitski's compositions, defining and sparking them in an important way. In fact, however, it became increasingly extraneous, a felicitous addition when it worked but an unnecessary intrusion when it did not, and in no case a vital formative element.

In 1965 Olitski found a single solution to the various problems raised in his work of the two previous years when he began applying his paint with sprayguns rather than with rollers. Such facture made the creation of unified compositions infinitely easier, easing the transition from point to point of the canvas and making possible limitless variations of hue and value, thereby permitting internal vitalizing of the color field without the introduction of object-like areas. Olitski's discovery and development of the spray technique roughly coincides with his residence in Vermont (1963-1967), and it is by no means without significance that these two events should be conjoined. Having taken what he needed from the urban and artistic environment of New York during the first half of the 1960's, he was ready for surroundings more congenial to the consolidation of his gains. He found those surroundings in New England and his pictures seem to reflect the distended experience of landscape—not only in their increasingly muted colors, but in the more frequent appearance of horizontal, panoramic formats.

The earliest spray paintings were created with an application so fine as to be almost invisible. The effect of such a painting as *Ariosto Kiss* (1965) is that of swirling clouds of color, and it is only on close examination that evidence of fracture can be seen. *Ariosto Kiss* is a particularly interesting picture in the context of Olitski's move to Vermont in that its muted and atmospheric colors (grayed blue and pink) are bounded on the bottom by an edge of deep blue pastel and shade off at the top into an area of light green, areas which could refer to water and overhanging trees, respectively, as foreground boundaries to an extensive landscape. This is not to suggest that this or any other picture by Olitski is to be read representationally as landscape, but merely to indicate the impact on him of his visual environment and the importance of his choice of that environment to his painting. The deep blue pastel edge of *Ariosto Kiss* is but one of many experiments in bounding compositions that Olitski tried during 1965 and 1966. *Free Departure* (1966) has an edge of less dense paint application along its bottom and left side, apparently achieved by masking those areas to keep some of the spray from them. Such masking results in a defining edge that is integral, not additive, and is in general a happier solution than brushed or drawn edges. *Bat* (1965) and *Rexus* (1966) achieve similar effects in other ways, the former by a narrow sprayed area at the bottom that bleeds into the major color area of the picture, the latter by being stretched so as to leave an irregular strip of unpainted canvas intruding into the composition

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along the right edge. In both cases, lack of linear definition helps integrate the edges with the total composition. Still another way of introducing drawing into sprayed compositions is shown in *Unlocked,* (1966), a tall, narrow picture. Here, the dimensions of the canvas itself constitute the drawing, shaping the entire composition. The question must again be asked, however, whether drawing along the edges, be it painted, drawn, sprayed, or simply implied by the shape of the canvas, is really necessary to Olitski's sprayed pictures. The fact that those pictures in which such drawing is most integral—least felt—are also most successful suggests that it is not. The spray technique as Olitski uses it is at once so delicate and so powerful, and the colors applied with it so subtly varied, that of itself it gives all the form necessary for the strength of the compositions in question. Variations of hue within these compositions provide a richness of pictorial incident that needs neither elaboration nor further definition. Nowhere is this more apparent than in such a work as *Free Departure,* informed with the startling effect of light characteristic of these pictures. It is as if the object defining and defined by light in traditional chiaroscuro—the heads in Rembrandt portraits, for example, light on one side and dark on the other—had been dropped from the picture completely, leaving pure light miraculously inflected from highlight to dark without the presence of an interrupting object. Such pictures are the realization of the Impressionist dream of having color function as light.

Clearly, pictures as disembodied as the spray compositions are at their best completely freed from directionality and all suggestion of objects or object-like areas within the canvas. Thus, extreme shapes are not always to their advantage (with notable exceptions such as *Unlocked*), particularly as in creating them there is a tendency to spray in the direction of those shapes that results in a longitudinal flow contradicting the pictures' all-over intention. In general, a gentle rectangle suits the sprayed compositions best, giving enough shape to spark them but not so much as to direct or restrict the internal expansiveness of the color. The introduction of heavily-impastoed areas, such as that at the extreme left of the strongly horizontal *Instant Loveland* (1968), also tends to work contrary to the sprayed pictures, producing a pictorial focus, an attention-demanding incident, that interrupts their gently unfolding transitions and is uncongenial to their total character. Finally, the accumulation of too much paint can result in an opacity that makes all or part of a composition go dead. Just as the pictures of the early 1960's needed areas of unpainted canvas to breathe, so the spray pictures need openness among the individual dots of paint—openness which may look through to other color areas rather than to unpainted canvas—to be wholly successful.

Having explored and mastered the tonal development of compositions, effects of colors interacting among one another, and the

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structural functions of hue and value, Olitski seems since about 1969, to have been searching for ways to re-introduce surface texture into his work and to create pictures in which coloristic richness results in monochromatic effect. In the process, he has experimented with several new methods of application, among them a grosser, more tactile spray, mopping, sponging, squeegeeing, and various combinations of these techniques. The squeegee pictures are generally executed in a single neutral color, and visual incident is created by contrasting the varying thicknesses of paint left as the squeegee throws up ridges at its ends or at the points at which it stops, with the thin areas left on the surfaces over which it has passed directly (*Radical Love 29,* 1972). In other pictures, Olitski sprays clear medium over or between paint layers, subduing and unifying underlying color areas and creating actual visual depth in which one looks from layer to layer, the contemporary equivalent of glazing in old master pictures. The *summa* of these current trends is *Darkness Spread #1* (1973), a noble painting of immense technical complexity. Largely monochrome at first glance, the picture can most nearly be described as brown. Its subtle inflections are caused partly by variations in hue and value and partly by the texture of what appears to be a sponged surface. An eruption of soft pink at the bottom and drawn lateral lines of pink and red animate the composition. It is only slowly that one realizes how much the picture's presence results not from what one thinks one sees, but from the richness of layer after layer of paint applied in different ways so that at different points one sees through to different layers. A coloristic variety not apparent on the surface informs the entire picture and, along with the textured surface largely devoid of color, gives new meaning to devices as old as the fifteenth century, bringing to integrated fulfillment Olitski's explorations of the last thirty years.

Faced with such pictures as *Darkness Spread #1,* one realizes what a radical statement Olitski has been able to make, motivated as he is by conservative ambitions and working with traditional means transformed. One is struck, too, by the fact that although Olitski lived through one of the great moments of the history of art—Abstract Expressionism in New York—he was relatively untouched by it, preferring instead to choose from less demanding contemporary art, and from the art of the past, what he needed to encourage him toward his goals. These considerations, as well as the fact that he has constantly placed himself in a position to take what he has needed from his visual surroundings, make one sense how powerful is the internal drive that pushes Olitski's painting beyond accepted possibility toward a constantly re-evaluated end. At a moment when the idea of applying paint to canvas is under attack from a multitude of non-visual ideas, it is certainly not too much to paraphrase Eliot on Joyce and say that Olitski makes painting possible for the contemporary world.

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ROBERT S. CLARK

Music Chronicle

PIERRE BOULEZ IS A POWERFUL MAN. He does not hold New York musical life in the viselike grip that Joseph Papp has on local theater, now that Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival has swallowed up the Lincoln Center Repertory Theater and exports plays to Broadway, too. But in the three years Boulez has been music director of the New York Philharmonic, he has acquired enormous influence in every subdivision of the city's musical life except opera—and he publicly forswore that, with his well-known exhortation a few years ago to "blow up the opera houses" in the name of musical health. Most obviously, his guiding hand in the Philharmonic's programming and his choice of guest conductors have been of great importance. Probably to the secret disappointment of some of his most outraged detractors, Boulez has not turned all the orchestral warhorses out to pasture and force-fed large helpings of contemporary music to Philharmonic audiences. But many of the scores recently heard in Avery Fisher Hall—those by Webern, Crumb, Berio, Reimann, and Nono, among others—would not have been chosen by Boulez's predecessors, and likewise several of the guest conductors—the late Bruno Maderna, Michael Gielen, and the young Englishman Andrew Davis—who are thoroughly at ease with contemporary music.

But Boulez's influence does not stop at Fisher Hall's exits. He has ranged abroad, literally and figuratively, with his downtown "Prospective Encounters" and uptown "Informal Evenings" built around twentieth-century music, his lectures to the American Musicological Society, his master classes in composition at the Juilliard School, his presentations and explications of his own music at Tully Hall and the Whitney Museum, and his season-end "rug concerts," for which the seats on the main floor of Fisher are removed to accommodate whatever listening attitude strikes the ticketholder's fancy while Boulez, free of the constraints of subscription-audience tastes, presents music that suits *his* fancy. Perhaps from the outset he has been aware that he had an uphill fight to retain his position, and felt that the best defense is a good offense. More likely, his activities reflect a vigorous musical personality committed to twentieth-century music and anxious to secure it a place in the minds and affections of audiences here and elsewhere. "Innovation" is a word that comes easily to lip and pen in our change-mongering time, and today's innovation often becomes tomorrow's fizzled gimmick. But Boulez has managed to give meaning to the word. One had only to hear the applause at last season's rug concerts to know that he will not be lightly jettisoned by the Philharmonic board when his contract runs out in 1977.

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Boulez's achievement has not been purely musical: he has garnered support as much through the strength and appeal of his personal character as through his music-making. He has won extensive loyalty in many quarters: among his associates, the orchestra's patrons and audiences, and musicians in every part of New York. Many current Boulez partisans remember the reports from the continent in the late forties and fifties, when the younger Boulez was the abrasive spearhead of post-Webernite total serialism and regularly damned the Establishment. These supporters find it difficult now to square that image with the genial, hortatory, and gently chaffing exegete and master of ceremonies at the "Prospective Encounters" and "Informal Evenings." Boulez's most recent compositions attest that he has not veered much from the rigorous course he set himself as a composer in his earlier manifestoes and theoretical writings, but his international conducting career seems to have softened the dour visage of the *doctrinaire* and to have changed the tone of his advocacy of contemporary music from stern and uncompromising to tolerant and coaxing.

There is general agreement, even in anti-Boulez enclaves, that the "innovative" aspect of his New York tenure has been successful. About his conducting of repertoire standards and works outside his special competency there is no agreement at all. The 1973-74 season provided grist for everyone's mill. His first presentation after the musicians' strike ended in December was an interesting revival, Robert Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's "Faust,"* one of several treatments of the Faust legend that was to have been the theme of the season's programming. Of it the New York *Times*' Harold Schonberg wrote, "[Boulez's] could not be called a very romantic performance; that is not in his nature. . . . The contours of the score stood revealed, even if Schumann's peculiar kind of romanticism evaded the conductor." I think these words can be called typical of one critical and popular commonplace about Boulez: that he has little sympathy with, or understanding of, the German symphonic classics. But a critic owes more to his readers than ill-defined notions about sympathy, or the lack of it, with national styles. Having heard several of Boulez's interpretations of German symphonic standards during the past season, I find my own dissatisfaction traceable to two factors: tempos that fall just short of convincing, and a tendency for passages between structural pivots of climax and repose to become mired at a single dynamic level —a kind of unwitting "terrace dynamics." Bernard Jacobson, former music critic of the Chicago *Daily News,* had something like this in mind when he said (I paraphrase from memory) that Boulez was expert at guiding orchestral progressions of line and color, but floundered where such progressions depended upon the marshaling of dynamic mass.

And yet one of Boulez's most endearing characteristics is his capacity

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to surprise. Along with predictably fine performances of Debussy, Bartók, Varèse, and other works of our century, and a less predictably effective one of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 (its second part a *Faust* setting), one of Boulez's triumphs last season was his reading of Brahms's Symphony No. 4. Tempos were fitting—the fleet scherzo was particularly winning—and dynamic variation was sufficient and logical; the string tone was lean and bright enough to chase the mustiness that can inhabit pages of this score, yet weighty enough at climaxes; and the winds and brass spoke with unusual candor. Would anyone have thought, too, that Boulez could resurrect and perform with skill Chabrier's charming trifle *Ode à la Musique,* for women's chorus and orchestra? Schonberg's comment after the Mahler Eighth can be taken as a text for the season as a whole: "The enigmatic Mr. Boulez remains as enigmatic as ever."

Part of the Boulez enigma is his fondness for the music of Gustav Mahler, the *ne plus ultra* of an intellectual world one would think totally alien to the Frenchman. But Boulez is a man of his time, and Mahler as we now perceive him is a figure for our time. Here and in Europe Mahler's reputation as a composer, trend-setting conductor, and intellectual beacon has reached a peak, its highest since his death or at least since the vogue for his music immediately after the first World War. The past season in New York offered at least one performance apiece of five of his nine completed symphonies, the song cycles *Songs of a Wayfarer* and *Kindertotenlieder,* the song-symphony *Das Lied von der Erde,* and numerous miscellaneous lieder, and the current season is following suit.

Nearly everyone who comments upon Mahler and his music repeats his prediction that his time would come, and proclaims that his time is now. Supporting arguments are legion. Whether one accepts them or not, it is inescapable that fascination with Mahler is almost universal. In his tiny but rich book *Aspects of Wagner* (Stein and Day, 1969), Bryan Magee proposes an explanation. Magee asserts that in Wagner's era it was true that, as Wagner insisted for reasons perhaps more personal than musical, Jews could not produce great art. "A really great creative artist," Magee says,

> is one who, freely expressing his own fantasies, needs, aspirations and conflicts, articulates those of a whole society. . . . He has a thousand roots in it of which he is unaware, nourishing him below the level of consciousness, so that when he speaks for himself he quite unconsciously speaks for others. . . . Jewish composers of Wagner's day were among the very first emancipated Jews, pastless in the society in which they were living and working. They spoke its language with, literally, a foreign accent.

But, Magee says, Wagner failed to see that this would change.

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> What was happening then and since is that while with the passage of generations Jews were integrating with the Western cultural tradition, that tradition was disintegrating to meet them half way. The atomization of society, the increase in pace of change and hence problems of adjustment, the consequent rootlessness of the individual, his alienation from himself, from society, and from the past of both—these have become major themes of the culture of our time.

Mahler and Arnold Schönberg, both Jews, "were alienated from two cultures—each rejected the Jewish religion yet was a lifelong victim of anti-semitism—and the music of both gave full expression to their personal and artistic isolation—even to its neurotic aspects." Thus Mahler and Schönberg were "in a position unconsciously to articulate the deepest concerns of the age they lived in. . . . The Jew has become the archetypal modern man."

Late in 1973 the Mahler tide washed up two new biographies,[1] Kurt Blaukopf's *Gustav Mahler,* decently but not very idiomatically translated from the German by Inge Goodwin, and the first of the two volumes of Henry-Louis de La Grange's gargantuan study simply called *Mahler.* A single look at the latter induces intellectual indigestion: seven hundred pages devoted to the first forty years of Mahler's life, a snail's-pace chronological narrative that draws upon every available source and quotes copiously from the letters, journals, books, newspaper articles, and the like of the composer, his friends, and his contemporaries—all supplemented by notes and appendices, one of the latter containing analyses of all of Mahler's works up through the Fourth Symphony (1900). La Grange himself characterizes the volume well: "I have tried to adopt as impersonal and unprejudiced an attitude as possible. . . . The mere exposition of facts should be enough to shed light on the sources of Mahler's art and on his unique and complex personality."

La Grange's book is a Mahler encyclopedia. Blaukopf's is deliberately more tendentious: its German subtitle is "The Contemporary of the Future." Like many others, Blaukopf wants to claim for Mahler the initiation or anticipation of numerous facets of our contemporary musical life. He cites, for example, Mahler's concern for spatial effects and his frequent reorchestration of passages of his own and others' works to suit the acoustical requirements of the various concert halls in which he conducted. Such empiricism, Blaukopf suggests, marks a transition in thinking about sonics: the "actual, unchangeable sound space" of the nineteenth century becomes a "manipulated, artificial sound space," and the techniques of sound engineers in the recording studio are not far behind. Other commentators find Mahler's spore in contemporary composition. His interest in the properties of sound *per se,* divorced from form, harmony, and other preoccupations of

[1] GUSTAV MAHLER, by *Kurt Blaukopf.* Praeger. $10.00. MAHLER, by *Henry-Louis de La Grange.* Doubleday. $17.50.

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traditional musical thought, is called by many (La Grange among them) an anticipation of Debussy, the *"Klangfarbenmelodie"* ("sound-color melody") of Webern, and contemporary use of sound properties as musical building blocks. The composer-author Dika Newlin hears intimations of atonality in the viola recitative that opens the unfinished Tenth Symphony. And many locate Mahler's modernism closer to the center of his composing practice. The historian Carl Schorske, in an extended essay on Mahler's importance for the *New York Times Book Review,* put it this way:

> His music is "modern" not because of any break with tonality, but because it is a montage of the essentially non-homogeneous elements that compose the "real" world as these are represented in established musical language whether cultivated or popular. Mahler draws deftly on a vast storehouse of musical idioms—German peasant dances, military marches, solemn quotations from Brahms or Wagner, hymn tunes, funeral dirges, Yiddish songs, even cow bells. He does so in a way that suggests tensions or tragicomic relations among them and hidden ironies within them—not unlike the way of the Beatles.

For Schorske—and others—Mahler is at once the spiritual father of the Beatles' "Sergeant Pepper" and George Crumb's "collage" pieces.

Obsessions with cultural figures always bring excess with them, and when the obsession recedes we are bound to see Mahler more clearly. Musical history has two ways of assimilating a complex major composer who stands at a watershed: either attaching him to a tradition he sums up and extends at the same time that he incidentally prefigures the new, or placing the sources of the new in his work at the center of his achievement and labelling him a progenitor who failed to cast off fully the shackles of tradition and habit. My guess is that, ultimately, Mahler will be seen as a figure like Bach whose very successs at synthesizing the tendencies implicit in a tradition spells *finis* for it. In the meantime, La Grange's labor of love and Blaukopf's commonsensical summary increase the intellectual capital on the subject.

The canard that the solo recital is dead has been circulating for years with little discernible effect on artists who want to give them or audiences who want to hear them. In the spring of 1974, large New York crowds registered their approval of the art of three outstanding lieder singers. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau sang programs of the music of Schumann and Schubert in Carnegie Hall. His concentration was no less intense, his phrases were no less finely wrought and his inflections no less intelligently done, than on other occasions when he has given us touchstones of the art that conceals art, and he was also in better vocal estate than he was two years ago, when he appeared here last. But for more than one auditor he seemed unable to create the illusion of spontaneity that can make the best songs moving miniature

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dramas. (Caution compels me to point out that art is elusive and criticism facile—and that the wise auditor examines himself first when searching for reasons for his disappointment.) In a program of familiar lieder by Schubert, Brahms, Mahler, and Strauss at Philharmonic Hall, Christa Ludwig created the illusion that Fischer-Dieskau did not. Her concentration is not as intense as his: an occasional song sagged in the middle, as if Miss Ludwig's imagination were not fully held by it. In instance after instance, however, her fusion of dramatic sensitivity with vocal sensuousness came close to ideal.

Finally, Janet Baker gave a Carnegie Hall recital of songs by Schubert, Mahler, Fauré, and Duparc, and Haydn and Mozart arias. She is a singer of so many virtues, and such rare ones, that it is a bit ungrateful to do anything but praise her. But in fairness some things must be conceded to her detractors. Her voice is not evenly produced throughout its range, and "white" unsupported tones sometime intrude upon her phrases. Her top notes are the work of will rather than endowment: they have little of the "ring" and light vibrato of her lovely mid-range. Like Fischer-Dieskau and Miss Ludwig, she sings well "forward," so that words come across with unusual clarity, but the price of such clarity is sometimes the feeling that her performances are a bit studied. Once more, it is the intensity of her concentration upon what she sings that puts to flight every obstacle to communication with her audiences. When that concentration is matched by full vocal command, she has few equals.

One thing common to the three recitals was the unsuitability of their locales to the intimate art of the solo song. Perhaps it was in part the intimacy of the music room at the Frick Collection that made the June recital of the young American mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade a fully satisfying event of the rarest kind. Already her voice, the timbre of which is similar to Miss Baker's in the mid-range, is more evenly and consistently produced than the Englishwoman's. Her refined and effortless *mezza-voce,* exquisitely floated *piano* tones, and beautifully equalized scale bring to mind the adjective "well-schooled," a term now in disuse but worth rescuing for the critical lexicon. Miss von Stade's assured command of the styles in her program, all in French but ranging from Dorumsgaard's and Canteloube's arrangements of ancient and popular airs to Debussy, Ravel, Poulenc, and the aria *"O ma lyre immortelle"* from Gounod's *Sapho,* would have been remarkable in an artist with twice her recital and operatic experience. Like the others cited here, she possesses that riveting concentration that draws the auditor into the heart of the musical experience. In addition, she has the gift of suggesting latent passion with the merest turn of a graceful phrase or the tiniest inflection of a word. I have heard Miss von Stade several times, always with pleasure but never before with such certainty that I was enjoying a major artist at work. She is a singer who exhausts the critic's supply of superlatives and drenches his jaded soul in refreshment.

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Reviews

VERNON YOUNG

Polo Was Invented by Chinese Women

NOT LONG AGO, WHEN READING *Memories, 1898-1939*, by C. M. Bowra, I noted with some astonishment this incredible foreshortening of time. In the twenties at Oxford, Bowra met Frederick Harrison, then ninety-two, who as an undergraduate had known Martin J. Routh, President of Magdalen, close to a century, himself. Routh, in *his* boyhood, had once met an old lady who, in her girlhood, had watched Charles II exercising his spaniels in Magdalen Grove! I think I have never come across a more succinct illustration of Emerson's "History is the lengthened shadow of a man." We tend to forget when we bemoan (or extoll) the swift and irrecoverable mutations of change and insist on the visible obliterations of setting and usage regnant only yesterday that in rare localities of our culture it has been possible for someone to live in a milieu barely encroached upon after three hundred years and that if in fact he had lived *throughout* that period (at Wadham College, for example) he would have been almost unaware of, and could have certainly existed undisturbed by, the Industrial Revolution, sundry wars of independence, the world-wide distension of the United States, the invention of train, automobile and aircraft, the extinction of traditional architecture, the revolts and exterminations of masses, the waging of two universal wars! To such a survivor, treading the same grass on which Charles II and his spaniels had stretched their legs, what would it mean to be told that he lives in the Space Age and that only assumptions bred by that age are relevant to his existence?

Now take that bridge of three hundred years and place it within the historical perspective of China. By all the evidence, a Chinaman endowed with something like immortality, born about 2000 B.C., let's say, and living until 1949 of our era, would have witnessed no authentically radical change in the daily life of men and women in his society: hence the probabilitity that had he been a poet his subject matter, confined to a very few categories, would have undergone no profound transformation for virtually 4000 years. Even the modifications in his style would not seem remarkably diverse between the beginning and end of his career! So, at any rate, runs the suggestion, from the sources of Chinese literature we have available, a suggestion enforced by the fact that all the Chinese *poetry* we read in English

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is expressed in free verse. Relying on the half-dozen books I have under review, the earliest poem quoted is a peasant song from "the twenty-third or twenty-fourth century, B.C." (translation by Ezra Pound).

> Sun up; work
> sundown; to rest
> dig well and drink up the water
> dig field; eat of the grain
> imperial power is? and to us what is it?[1]

Three thousand years later, this is the burden of a "ballad" composed by Lu Yu, "The Merchant's Joy":

> the Mayor? the Governor? we don't even know their names;
> what's it to us who wields power in the palace?
> Confucian scholar, hard up, dreaming of one square meal;
> a limp, a stumble, prayers for pity at His Excellency's gate;
> teeth rot, hair falls out—no one looks your way;
> belly crammed with classical texts, body lean with care—
> See what Heaven gives me—luck thin as paper!
> Now I know that merchants are the happiest of men.[2]

Move forward a few centuries to our own time and in company with the Collectivist pastoralism of "Harvesting Wheat for the Public Share," by Li Chu, you will find this curious elegy, also by a woman, "The Fall of Moon Lady—*Before the landing of Apollo X*":

> It's the tragedy of us gods
> Capable of foreseeing the future.
> Tomorrow, shining with metallic pride,
> They will arrive to take over my home.
> Tomorrow, I will hear from the trial of 4000 years:
>
> Life detention is my sentence.
> Don't you see thousands of dead souls
> Whirled in black fumes
> Hastily coming to mourn over my fate?
> As hastily as these long-ceased stars
> That bent forward with their gleaming eyes
> To stare at my ascension.

[1] Quoted in Introduction to CHINESE LITERATURE: An Anthology from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, edited by *William McNaughton*. Charles E. Tuttle. $15.00.

[2] THE OLD MAN WHO DOES AS HE PLEASES Poems and Prose by Lu Yu. Translated by *Burton Watson*. Columbia University. $6.95.

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Tomorrow I will sink into darkness
Like a wing-broken china bird
Eternally
Falling toward midnight

(Chung Ling, 1945-)[3]

Halt anywhere along the unbroken thread of Chinese poetry: although you will find instances of immense refinement and variable intensity (there are verses contemporary with Chairman Mao's as volatile as any by Verlaine) you will find few examples you can fairly name complex. At least, to the understanding of the Westerner they are not complex. What, on Chinese earth, happened in 4000 years? From our naive viewpoint, we might well answer, nothing happened; nothing at all; only birth and death, seedtime and harvest, drought and plenty, provinces at war or united, one emperor succeeding another—like waves or American presidents: meanwhile an eternity of rice and wine, rain and wind, sun and moon—in short, poetry. Here extends a monotony I find utterly fascinating, precisely because it repudiates most of the philosophy and history to which I have pledged my belief and from which drawn my inferences: the assurrance of multiplicity and the incontrovertible evidence of gigantic upheavals in the human psyche, prompted by transformations in the environment. Yet only pivot yourself outside yourself by an act of imagination: i.e., outside all you have inherited by conditioning, and everything becomes hearsay or illusion. One is an accidental increment of a perverse evolution never undertaken in a land that stretches from the Hindu Kush to the Pacific.

Chinese poetry, when all generalizations else have been relegated, is a poetry of retrospect. The historical present is only a subterfuge for echoing what has passed or, at most, for concentrating on a single aspect of the present in order to exclude whatever turmoil might be evoked by consenting to a flood of sentiment, hostile or ecstatic. *All* Chinese poetry is "Emotion recollected in tranquillity." Volumes of it will rarely disclose rancor, sophistry or the protuberant ego.

If I now return, out of chronology in this assignment, to the work of Lu Yu (Sung Dynasty, 1125-1210), quoted earlier, I am probably over-emphasizing his importance in the pageant of centuries. My excuse is the very ingratiating versions of Burton Watson which convey, with every line, a singular personality, that of a man who wrote poems (when "Cathay" was scarcely an actuality in the minds of whatever Westerners were responsibly curious about its existence), probably indistinguishable from any of merit which preceded or followed his, yet are uniquely compelling while you attend to them alone; a man who wrote a prose diary of his boat journey of 156 days, from Shao-

[3] THE ORCHID BOAT Women Poets of China. Translated and edited by *Kenneth Rexroth* and *Ling Chung*. McGraw-Hill. $6.95.

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sing to Shu, where he was to assume duties as a vice-governor, which must surely be notable among records of its kind for both the scope and the telescopic intimacy of its observations. We have been instructed, perhaps inaccurately, that Petrarch was the first known Westerner to ascend a mountain gratuitously—to take in the view. In Lu Yu's day—established for how many centuries before?—the river and mountain country through which he ventured was heavily punctuated with "vista pavilions" and traditional sites from which to look at "the view"—and a history of comparative aesthetics is suggested by his repeated refrain that misty mountains or tossed waves *looked like a painting*. (Further, he continually sampled wells listed in an official Classification, which recommended springs and streams whose waters were "most suitable for making tea." The Chinese, it seems, invented not only the mother-in-law institution, bound feet and gunpowder but also Selective Tourism. Henri Michaux once observed that the only reason they didn't invent a fork was because they found no conceivable use for such a utensil!)

The unfailing curiosity with which Lu Yu responds to every variant of temperature and physiography, every occupational ritual, to species of fish, the beauty of wayside shrines and the fearful passage of a Yangtze gorge is purified documentary, animated by wonder and by his "cinematic" eye for movement, grouping, color and atmospheric shifts of tonality. This diary was compiled in his forty-fifth year; most of the poems printed by Watson postdate this adventure and are therefore marked by a mature grasp of the pictorial phenomena Lu Yu transcribes—landscape and seasons, festivals and commemorations—by a growing resignation to the dissatisfactions of his career, to his own shortcomings (he was a confirmed drunkard and consequently forever falling from political grace) and to an epicurean selection of moments in which the essentials of living are nominated and expressively defined. "The world's changes—huge and never-ending; . . . In man's life the happiest thing/ is to lie and hear them pressing out the new wine." "Round the sky's edges I've travelled/ a thousand, ten thousand miles,/ now—of all things—I take lessons in spring planting/ from the old man next door." Steadily resolved was the complaint of penury and oblivion I quoted above; at the age of sixty-eight he wrote a poem I reproduce because to it certain poems of Robinson Jeffers bear striking resemblance. ("The Stone on the Hilltop," 1195).

> Autumn wind and ten thousand trees wither;
> spring rain: a hundred grasses grow.
> Is this really some plan of the Creator,
> this flowering and fading, each season that comes?
> Only the stone there on the hilltop,
> its months and years too many to count,
> knows nothing of the four-season round,

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wearing its constant colors unchanged.
The old man has lived all his life in these hills;
though his legs fail him, he still clambers up,
now and then strokes the rock and sighs three sighs:
how can I make myself stony like you?

Lu Yu is represented in Mr. McNaughton's anthology by a single poem, translated with syntactical sophistication by the editor. One concedes that if almost any of the outstanding poets therein were given the splendid isolation of a separate volume he would be as accessible and as lovable as Lu Yu.

McNaughton's expositions and arrangements are lucid reductions of a panorama otherwise confusing to a series of distinct groupings, by subject category, extending from the sixth century to the present. I want to call special attention to the impure but exciting "prose songs" of the Han period, for the greater part in free verse, with unpredictable exceptions apparently dictated by the whim of the poet. *Fu* is a synonym for prose-song and actually means "to orate." Such songs are differentiated by "narrative *fu*," "chant things," "speak patterns" and "imitate *fu*"; in English translation, however, the divisions seem less absolute. What the forms have in common is a calculated virtuosity in which the obligation of the poet is to name as many objects or verbal imitations of process as he can, within his chosen subject. No mere catalogue, the result is frequently breath-taking and the more impressive because the elaborations on a theme —wind, gardens, poverty, mountains—are executed with grace and invariably arrive at a vision of beauty or an exhortation to wisdom. *The Wind Fu* ironically describes the antithetical effect of wind as received by the mandarin and by the folk.

With a puff or breath it shakes the leaves and flowers,
Wanders among the cassias and pepper trees,
Or soars over the swift waters.
It buffets the mallow flower,
Sweeps the angelica, touches the spikenard,
Glides over the sweet lichens and lights on willow shoots,
Rambling over the hills
And their scattered host of fragrant flowers.
After this, it wanders into the courtyard,
Ascends the jade hall in the north,
Clambers over gauze curtains,
Passes through the inner apartments,
And so becomes Your Majesty's wind.
When this wind blows on a man,
At once he feels a chill run through him,
And he sighs at its cool freshness.

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Clear and gentle,
It cures sickness, dispels drunkenness,
Sharpens the eyes and ears,
Relaxes the body and brings benefit to men.
This is what is called the hero wind of Your Majesty.

"The Upper Grove Fu," a concatenated tour de force, after resuming a montage of restless rivers, anthologies of terraqueous creatures, birds and exotic plants, fauna, ornamental architecture, trees and an imperial hunt, comes to a close, like a sarabande following a vehement presto, with an exquisitely brief vision of singing girls in a procession.

The Poetry of Exile is a more familiar genre; the condition of exile, forced or voluntary, was perennial in the lives of poets whose fortunes were customarily tied to those of the regime they served. After the collapse of the Han Dynasty, sentiments suggesting Schopenhauer's are abundant. "Life is unending tedium/ about which I have nothing else to say/ But to stand up and draw a deep breath." Nature Poetry is an all-embracing description, for there is very little Chinese poetry which is *not,* in one way or another, related to nature, but clear distinctions have always been made between the domestic genre, "farm and garden" poems, and wilderness verse, i.e. of "mountains and rivers." The latter were especially prevalent after the appearance of Buddhism but were far from negligible before. Collected from the Han to the Liang (third century B.C.), the so-called erotic poetry chosen by McNaughton will not ratify our contemporary poets' eagerness to find a respectable precedent; these are far from pornographic; they abound in allusive references and in symbols we might today call Freudian; the verse is usually delicate and iridescent, the images never lascivious. That another, more explicit kind of erotic verse was composed, however, is amply disclosed in *The Orchid Boat,* 120 poems by Chinese women, convincingly rendered by Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, ranging from 500 B.C. to the recent present, among which are fastidious marvels of sensuality, bitter-sweet but calm-of-mind recollections of delights gone by, of male (*and* female) paragons vanished, of tenacious autumnal memories of a single musk-laden moment intensified by reminders from the rain or a fleeting swallow. The following hive of euphemistic images was composed by Huang O, uncommonly the daughter of a high official, married to a poet (1498-1569).

You held my lotus blossom
In your lips and played with the
Pistil. We took one piece of
Magic rhinoceros horn[4]
And could not sleep all night long.
All night the cock's gorgeous crest

[4] Thought to be an aphrodisiac.

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Stood erect. All night the bee
Clung trembling to the flower
Stamens. Oh my sweet perfumed
Jewel! I will allow only
My lord to possess my sacred
Lotus pond, and every night
You can make blossom in me
Flowers of fire.

(To the tune, "Soaring Clouds")

Poems from our century have been perhaps disproportionately favored in this anthology; with few exceptions they remain the poetry of transience and falling petals, but into them are introduced tokens of the contemporary scene: cigarettes, student debates, a reference to Monte Carlo, hopes of political liberation and, as I've quoted, Apollo X. Even so, soldiers shoot one another with arrows; the oblivion of night, footprints in the snow, interlocking spider-webs and wine of reunion are thematically conspicuous. It is a lovely, all too short collection, with a concise, instructive essay by Ling Chung on the provenance of poems included and an index on the status of their composers. Before the seventeenth century, A. D., poetry was rarely a permissible indulgence of educated women from the courtier class. Preceding this date, the majority of poems was penned by gifted courtesans, occasionally by a merchant's wife or by a Taoist priestess (who was *not* enjoined by custom either to be chaste or dumb and to let who would be clever!). . . . Chinese poetry: a permanently gracious infirmity of noble minds: tranquil pessimism reconciled to indignity and decay by the unflagging wonders of the natural world.

Prose fiction is another matter, far less penetrable or perhaps I should say far less persuasive, unless the reader is heavily equipped with that well-known suspension of disbelief. For centuries the legends and later the so-called novels of China were amalgams of naive realism, ethical sermon and habitual transactions with the occult. While Mr. McNaughton's splendid anthology is so purely representative as to make several others supererogatory, the Chai and Chai collection, issued ten years ago, now in paperback, is a useful supplement to the prose pieces in McNaughton, particularly with regard to the modern age.[5] And for the central period, so to speak, H. C. Chang's compilation of "popular fiction and drama"[6] (almost too exhaustively annotated for the common reader, fills in the picture from the twelfth century when something like an art of story-telling flourished unprecedentedly, to

[5] A TREASURY OF CHINESE LITERATURE Translated and edited by *Ch' u Chai* and *Winberg Chai*. Apollo Editions. $2.45.

[6] CHINESE LITERATURE: Popular Fiction & Drama. *H. C. Chang*. Edinburgh University (Aldine). $8.75.

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the late eighteenth century when, on the basis of Tang Dynasty material, Li Ju-Chen wrote an interminable "novel" from which "The Womens' Kingdom" has been extracted, a bizarre narrative reminiscent not only of the preceding metamorphic tradition but also of Swift's voyages, with its startling transvaluations brought about by life in a country where familiar customs have been stood on their heads—in this tale catastrophically by the exchange of roles between men and women: not an altogether facetious chronicle!

Editors of these two volumes are eager to impress upon us the discernible development of the prose tale in Chinese culture—the increase of credibility, the definition of individual characters—yet the unconditioned Western reader will find it hard to agree when he finds from the beginning to the end of the span the same traffic with supernatural agencies, the same method, inculcated by the practise of public recitation, of prefacing each tale with an anecdote in kind (to quieten and focus the attention of the audience), the same absence of psychology in our inherited sense of the term, the same repetitious, episodic crescendos which could justifiably be terminated in ten pages or go on to fill fifty bound folios. This is not simply Chinese, of course; this is the *additive* tradition of the fairy tale and the picaresque mode which characterized fiction everywhere until the novel as we know it was created and rapidly transformed in the bourgeois West. For the reader perusing any of these anthologies, the question will be how soon his reflection, "This is charming!" may be altered to "This is idiotic!" With poetry, a concentration of the quintessential believed to be true, we experience no lapse of credulity. With fiction, known at heart to be untrue, gathered from centuries of conventional belief in dragons, supermen, dwarfs, spirits disguised as foxes, "lost horizon" Utopias—and, withal, imbued with fatalism—we are forced to invite our minds into a state of child-like simplicity few of us possess or find welcome. Anyone who does have an unlimited tolerance for stories in which *anything* can happen (as against our conviction that in a novel only that can happen which is intrinsic to the announced reality) will find a feast in the weird tales assembled by the Chais or by H. C. Chang. My own reaction is not one of boredom; of fascination, rather, on the verge of bewilderment. Here's a typical paragraph of a kind I find irresistible, from "The Tale of Three Kingdoms" in the McNaughton book (mid-fourteenth century, the setting third century).

> There is but one country that can overcome these men; that is the Wuko country. It lies seven hundred li to the southeast. The king of that state is named Wut'uku. He is a giant. He does not eat grain, but lives on serpents and venomous beasts. He wears only armor, which is impenetrable to swords and arrows. His men wear rattan armor. This rattan grows in gullies, climbing over rocks and walls. The inhabitants cut the rattans and steep them in oil for half a

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> year. Then they are dried in the sun. When dry they are steeped again, and so on many times. Then they are plaited into helmets and armor. Clad in this the men float across rivers, and it does not get wet. No weapon can penetrate it. The soldiers are called the Rattan Army. You may seek aid from this king, and with his help you can take Chuko Liang as easily as a sharp knife cleaves a bamboo.

All this takes on a livelier interest when I learn that this was a favorite novel of Mao Tse-tung and that from it he acquired a fund of military lore!

Modern Chinese fiction appears to me a highly dubious conception, for if such works as *The Dream of the Red Chamber* or *Rickshaw Boy* or *Spring Silkworms* and the writings of Lu Xun are all widely acknowledged as eminent in modern Chinese literature, the subject is one which can only be disturbed to embarrassment by an exacting literary critic. During the Twenties and Thirties there was a brief hour of existential fiction, exemplified by the stories, "K'ung I-chi" by Lu Hsin (died 1936) and "One Intoxicating Evening of Spring Breeze" by Yü Ta-fu (1898-1945), both in the Chai anthology. The editor cites Hemingway as a parallel, a comparison lazily conjured, to my mind. American critics and those intimidated by them exclaim "Whitman!" when they encounter poetic profusion or grunt "Hemingway!" whenever they meet exiguous prose. Apart from the fact that these stories predate the known Hemingway, they are temperamentally closer to the spirit of Dostoevsky.

Which brings me to the poems of Mao;[7] a choice handful closes McNaughton's anthology; all now available, it is reported, are translated and introduced by the Engles, who frequently write a thousand words to explain the background of eight lines, making it impossible for me, even if I wished, to address this subject by pretending that the poems are autonomous and my reception of them unbiased. In view of the revolutionary character of the man who wrote them, I am naturally struck by his dependence on the traditional forms and the antique stock of images, and I am favorably moved by the nature metaphors (by no means restricted to a political inference) he plentifully employs. Yet of the poems' overall value I am disqualified as a judge, since the correlative to which they are dedicated is one to which I am totally averse: the supremacy of Communism.

[7] POEMS OF MAO TSE-TUNG. Translated with introduction and notes by *Hua-Ling Nieh Engle* and *Paul Engle*. Delta. $2.45; paper.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Lawrence

LAWRENCE'S RELATION TO THE GREAT RUSSIANS, whom he like everybody else read and marveled at when young, is camouflaged by the ferocity with which he repudiated them. Dostoevsky became Lawrence's particular target, the enemy of light, "the rat, slithering along in hate, in the shadows, and, in order to belong to the light, professing love, all love. . . . He is not nice." Tolstoy was "old Leo," the self-tormenting moralist, the man who lost his nerve, who condemned his deepest feelings, betrayed his passionate nature ("wetted on the flame of his own manhood") by insisting that social forms were the measure of life—by pretending, for instance, that the house-pet Pierre was something and the soldier Vronsky nothing. Moreover the Russians, lumped together, would have to take the blame for inventing the soul:

> That's why the Russians are so popular. No matter how much of a shabby animal you may be, you can learn from Dostoievsky and Tchekhov, etc., how to have the most tender, unique, coruscating soul on earth. And so you may be most vastly important to yourself. Which is the private aim of all men. The hero had it openly. The commonplace person has it inside himself, though outwardly he says: Of course I'm no better than anybody else! His very asserting it shows he doesn't think it for a second. Every character in Dostoievsky or Tchekhov thinks himself *inwardly* a nonesuch, absolutely unique.

(One wonders whether Lawrence knew that in Russian "soul" was also a euphemism for "male serf": e.g., in Gogol's *Dead Souls*.) Against such formidable and seductive enemies, he had to be unrelenting. "Oh, don't think I would belittle the Russians," he wrote to a friend in 1916 (he was thirty-one, and had nearly completed the final draft of his most Russian novel, *Women in Love*). "They have meant an enormous amount to me; Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoievsky—mattered almost more than anything, and I thought them the greatest writers of all time. And now, with something of a shock, I realise a certain crudity and thick, uncivilised, insensitive stupidity about them, I realise how much finer and purer and more ultimate our own stuff is." The emphatic word is "ultimate" because it's the word likely to be flaunted by admirers of the Russians, especially of Dostoevsky; and Lawrence emphasizes it again in his largest, bristliest, and most brilliant statement of repudiation (written in 1920, as the beginning of his Preface to Shestov's *All Things Are Possible*):

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In his paragraph on The Russian Spirit, Shestov gives us the real clue to Russian literature. European culture is a rootless thing in the Russians. With us, it is our very blood and bones, the very nerve and root of our psyche. We think in a certain fashion, we feel in a certain fashion, because our whole substance is of this fashion. Our speech and feeling are organically inevitable to us.

With the Russians it is different. They have only been inoculated with the virus of European culture and ethic. The virus works in them like a disease. And the inflammation and irritation comes forth as literature. The bubbling and fizzing is almost chemical, not organic. It is an organism seething as it accepts and masters the strange virus. What the Russian is struggling with, crying out against, is not life itself: it is only European culture which has been introduced into his psyche, and which hurts him. The tragedy is not so much a real soul tragedy, as a surgical one. Russian art, Russian literature after all does not stand on the same footing as European and Greek or Egyptian art. It is not spontaneous utterance. It is not the flowering of a race. It is a surgical outcry, horrifying, or marvellous, lacerating at first; but when we get used to it, not really so profound, not really ultimate, a little extraneous.

So the Russians are "a little extraneous" to "European culture," and Lawrence has a clear field. The only other writer as unlimited and authoritative in his judgments of big names and entire cultures is Tolstoy (Lawrence's "old Leo," the repudiated father), who denounces the French, the Germans, modern art, Symbolism, Impressionism, Naturalism, the Decadents, Ibsen, Wagner, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Shakespeare as exuberantly as Lawrence denounces many on the same list plus many others—the Americans, the Italians, the Australians, the English, men, women, the young, the old—and of course the Russians (from whom nobody learned more than their denouncer). Harry T. Moore, however, doesn't find the parallel interesting enough to bring up in his biography of Lawrence.[1] Moore mentions Tolstoy only five times, always in passing, though one would expect a biographer to be alerted by the fact he offers, in passing, that Lawrence in his early twenties—by the end of his twenties he had written almost all his major fiction—still "believed that *Anna Karenina* was the greatest of novels." Logan Speirs has an excellent chapter[2] on the indebtedness of *The Rainbow* to *Anna Karenina*: these "two massive studies of marriage," with such closely related characters as Levin/Tom Brangwen and Vronsky/Skrebensky; not that Lawrence is ever imitating or duplicating—the connection isn't originals-and-copies but fathers-and-sons, new locales for the same immortal germ plasm. *Women in Love* (which Speirs doesn't

[1] THE PRIEST OF LOVE, by *Harry T. Moore*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $15.00.
[2] In his excellent book, *Tolstoy and Chekhov* (Cambridge University Press, 1971).

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discuss) is another "massive study of marriage," and its two contrasting pairs of lovers—the doomed and the fortunate—are evidently descended from Anna-Vronsky and Kitty-Levin. The doubly Russian peculiarity of *Women in Love,* though, is that while its ostensible subject is Tolstoyan, its tone and structure are Dostoevskian: after the unhurried and multitudinous narrative of *The Rainbow,* bursts of apocalyptic talk alternating with bursts of disruptive action; abrupt and unrationalized changes of mood; reciprocally destructive relationships such as the one between Gudrun and Gerald, who are fighting the hopeless war that Nastasya fought with Myshkin and Rogozhin in *The Idiot.* The question of *The Rainbow* (as of *Anna Karenina*) is, What is the meaning of life and marriage? whereas the question of *Women in Love* (as of any Dostoevsky novel) is, What is the meaning of death and dissolution? In *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love,* Lawrence is the first English novelist to pose the cosmic questions, and he had nobody to learn from except the Russians. Or, as Speirs states the case specifically for Lawrence and Tolstoy:

> Both Tolstoy and Lawrence seek in their art to arrive at some definition of fulfilment in life. They both see life as a quest for spiritual illumination which must be made anew by each individual in his own way according to his generation and his circumstances. They both believe that any illumination which is attained can only be made perfect when a man and a woman have come together in their lives. These conceptions underlie their great art. Starting from them, they travelled along widely divergent paths. But Lawrence always understood Tolstoy very well. One can see this beneath his harshest criticisms. He said of him: "Count Tolstoi had that last weakness of a great man: he wanted the absolute."

So did Lawrence, and there isn't room for more than one absolutist at a time.

For Tolstoy and Lawrence, literature had to be tested by life and, for both of them, it eventually failed the test. Tolstoy staked everything on marriage—his own, that is—and lost. *Anna Karenina* was the last novel he could possibly have written while still clinging by his fingernails to the notion that marriage is possible (and it's the greatest novel about marriage). Within months after completing it—he wasn't yet fifty—he had almost given up on life and had been very near suicide, as he disclosed in "A Confession"; soon and for the rest of his long life, he had given up on marriage, women, sex, meat, alcohol, violence, and such vicious trivialities as *Anna Karenina* (when admirers came to old Leo with praise of *Anna Karenina,* he retorted: "What difficulty is there in writing about how an officer fell in love with a married woman? there's no difficulty in it, and, above all, no

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with a married woman? there's no difficulty in it, and, above all, no good in it"; when they begged him for "another *War and Peace*," he exclaimed that "it's like asking an old whore to fling up her skirts and dance!"). Of course he remained the best writer in the world, and every once in a while, whenever he got restless or exasperated enough to take a break from turning out his tracts for the times (which are as fresh and straightforward as one would expect from the best writer in the world), he would produce a monomaniacal masterpiece like *The Death of Ivan Ilych* or an antidote to *Anna Karenina* like *The Kreutzer Sonata* or a miraculously clear-eyed adventure story like *Hadji Murad* (written in his seventies) or a jeremiad against Shakespeare, Wagner, and their innumerable company of bogus artists.

Lawrence, on the other hand, staked everything on marriage and won. In the five years following his elopement with Frieda, he wrote *Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow,* and *Women in Love,* which can be called without sheer absurdity the three best English novels of the twentieth century. Yet *Women in Love* was for Lawrence very much like what *Anna Karenina* had been for Tolstoy: it was the last possible novel Lawrence could have written while he still believed in the notion of marriage that had sustained him through those prodigious years. At thirty-one, he would live another thirteen years and write thousands of letters as vivid as any in the world and dozens of volumes of fiction, poetry, travel, psychology, prophecy, arcane speculation, archeology, anthropology, and the most incandescent literary criticism in English, but he would never write another good novel or even any short stories up to the level of the dozen or more wonderful stories he had written during his twenties. In "Why the Novel Matters" Lawrence proudly called himself a novelist and the novel "the one bright book of life"—

> . . . I am a novelist. And being a novelist, I consider myself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet, who are all great masters of different bits of man alive, but never get the whole hog.
>
> The novel is the one bright book of life. Books are not life. They are only tremulations on the ether. But the novel as a tremulation can make the whole man alive tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or any other book-tremulation can do.

—but he could hardly have said (or believed) that he had stopped being a novelist years before, that "the one bright book of life" would have to be written by others now, that Lawrence himself was only the brightest of the reflective onlookers. At forty, writing *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* the feeble and spiteful novel with which he intended to glorify "the phallic consciousness," he was already (if Frieda's complaint to her friends, as Moore reports it, can be trusted)

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impotent.[3] The phallic consciousness had become an idea in a book ("Books are not life"). No doubt what Lawrence always referred to as his "bronchial" ailment—it was never anything else till he died of tuberculosis—had something to do with the sudden decline. No doubt the suppression of *The Rainbow,* the consequent delay in the publication of *Women in Love,* and Lawrence's failure to come into his rightful inheritance and be accepted as the greatest living English novelist had something to do with it. The First World War—which Lawrence considered the death of hope for Europe—no doubt angered, infuriated, troubled, depressed, perhaps even *diminished* him; he often said so; though public disasters are handy as surrogates for the private agonies that the agonist is trying to forget but at least would rather not talk about or allow in the line of sight.

Tucked into a sub-section of Moore's book with the inscrutable title "Strife and Scholarship" are a half-dozen skittish pages on Lawrence's sexuality (which Moore sums up with a numerical conclusion from Richard Aldington, who "stated in a letter of March 16, 1960, 'I should say D.H.L. was about 85 per cent hetero and 15 per cent homo' "):

> Compton Mackenzie claims, in his autobiography, . . . that Lawrence told him, "I believe that the nearest I've ever come to perfect love was with a young coal-miner when I was about sixteen." If this is precisely what he said, he could hardly have been referring to Alan Chambers, a farm boy, though Chambers may have gone into the pits later. . . .
>
> [The] . . . friendship passages between the Lawrence hero and another male, not only in earlier but also in some of the later novels, have caused a raising of eyebrows but, despite all innuendoes, Lawrence doesn't seem to have been a homosexual; at least not a complete or continually practicing one. Frieda Lawrence used to insist that her husband was not in any way a homosexual, but towards

[3] One of those Russians had anticipated him again—Chekhov, aged thirty-three, untactfully explaining to his friend Suvorin, aged fifty-nine, why Zola shouldn't have written about a young woman who falls in love with an old man: "It hurts me to read about Clotilde being screwed by Pascal instead of someone younger and stronger. . . . And what nonsense! Is potency a sign of true life and health? Is screwing the only thing that makes one a real person? All thinkers are impotent at forty, while ninety-year-old savages keep ninety wives apiece. . . ." But then Chekhov (for whom Lawrence's final formula of repudiation was: "a second-rate writer and a willy wet-leg") had anticipated Lawrence in other ways: by flaming into literary prominence in his twenties; by charming almost everybody and being content with almost nobody; by traveling much of his life all over Europe (and across Asia; though not, like Lawrence, to Australia and America also) in search of a cure for traveling; by changing the nature of the short story for his time and for all time; by burning out at forty-four with tuberculosis.

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the end of her life she changed her tune somewhat; as she wrote in 1949 to Edward Gilbert, who was studying Lawrence, "Murry and he had no 'love affair.' But he did not disbelieve in homosexuality." Not long afterwards, Frieda wrote to Murry that she was sure Lawrence had had no homosexual feeling for him, that Lawrence's homosexuality had lasted only a brief time (apparently in the World War I days of the Cornish farmer), and that she had fought with him over it, and had won.

Certainly no one spoke out on sexual matters more boldly and clearly than Lawrence, and there is no passage in his works in which he writes approvingly of *sexual* relations, that is of sexual gratification, between men. Indeed, he writes disapprovingly of such things, though in the unused "Prologue" to *Women in Love* . . . Birkin's inclinations seem definitely homosexual. Yet how much of this reflects Lawrence himself as problematic. (In the film made from the novel, the director erred in giving Birkin a beard, like the author's, which Lawrence hadn't done. Birkin may have been somewhat of a spokesman for the author, but he was not the author himself.) . . .

This is how Moore's typewriter goes rattling along, its eyebrows raised and lowered by innuendo and disclaimer, homo and hetero, Birkin's razor and Lawrence's beard, sex and love (the phoenix and the turtle), getting your kicks minus chicks in the Cornish sticks (the phoenix turned turtle), strife and scholarship at the tricky flicks. It's a dizzying ride, and Moore never comes off it long enough to notice, in *Women in Love* and elsewhere, an instructive peculiarity of Lawrence's descriptions of people—that a woman is the clothes she wears (sometimes specified with a dressmaker's eye, as in the description of Gudrun on page 2 of *Women in Love*) and a man is his body (as if he wears no clothes at all):

> "Ah-h-h!" came her strange, intaken cry, as, on the reflex, she started, turned and fled, scudding with an unthinkable swift beating of her white feet and fraying of her white garments, towards the church. Like a hound the young man was after her, leaping the steps and swinging past her father, his supple haunches working like those of a hound that bears down on the quarry.

Here, in the wedding scene of the opening chapter of *Women in Love* (the bride's "white feet" are her shoes, and the bridegroom, one hopes, is fully clothed), it's nobody but the omniscient author giving his view of things; and readers will remember that Birkin's thighs, flanks, and loins play an important role in the author's presentation of the love scene with Ursula later on. As for Birkin's relation to the author, Birkin may lack Lawrence's beard but, in the novel Lawrence published, Birkin expresses just about every attitude and opinion Law-

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rence was expressing elsewhere at the time in his own person; and the "unused 'Prologue'" to *Women in Love* seems to have been intended as a sober and explicit account of the deepest feelings of the character who will be much more than "somewhat of a spokesman" for his author:

> All the time, he recognized that, although he was always drawn to women, feeling more at home with a woman than with a man, yet it was for men that he felt the hot, flushing, roused attraction which a man is supposed to feel for the other sex. Although nearly all his living interchange went on with one woman or another, although he was always terribly intimate with at least one woman, and practically never intimate with a man, yet the male physique had a fascination for him, and for the female physique he felt only a fondness, a sort of sacred love, as for a sister. . . .
>
> He wanted all the time to love women. He wanted all the while to feel this kindled, loving attraction towards a beautiful woman, that he would often feel towards a handsome man. But he could not. Whenever it was a case of a woman, there entered in too much spiritual, sisterly love; or else, in reaction, there was only a brutal, callous sort of lust.
>
> This was an entanglement from which there seemed no escape. How can a man *create* his own feelings? He cannot. It is only in his power to suppress them, to bind them in the chain of the will. And what is suppression but a mere negation of life, and of living.
>
> He had several friendships wherein this passion entered, friendships with men of no very great intelligence, but of pleasant appearance: ruddy, well-nourished fellows, good-natured and easy, who protected him in his delicate health more gently than a woman would protect him. He loved his friend, the beauty of whose manly limbs made him tremble with pleasure. He wanted to caress him.
>
> But reserve, which was as strong as a chain of iron in him, kept him from any demonstration. And if he were away for any length of time from the man he loved so hotly, then he forgot him, the flame which invested the beloved like a transfiguration passed away, and Birkin remembered his friend as tedious. He could not go back to him, to talk as tediously as he would have to talk, to take such a level of intelligence as he would have to take. He forgot his men friends completely, as one forgets the candle one has blown out. . . .

Birkin is telling all, and it's much more than we need to know for fiction:

> It might be any man, a policeman who suddenly looked up at him, as he inquired the way, or a soldier who sat next to him in a railway carriage. How vividly, months afterwards, he would recall the soldier who had sat pressed up close to him on a journey from

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> Charing Cross to Westerham; the shapely, motionless body, the large, dumb, coarsely-beautiful hands that rested helpless upon the strong knees, the dark brown eyes, vulnerable in the erect body. . . .

The preoccupations are Birkin's (or Lawrence's), but the voice could be out of an earlier "Confession," the voice of old Leo, condemning his deepest feelings yet superbly unregenerate at the heart of his *mea culpa,* attentive and full of thought, father, guide, fellow-victim, self-tormenting judge, spirit trapped in the wayward flesh:

> He wanted to cast out these desires, he wanted not to know them. Yet a man can no more slay a living desire in him, than he can prevent his body from feeling heat and cold. He can put himself into bondage, to prevent the fulfilment of the desire, that is all. But the desire is there, as the travelling of the blood itself is there, until it is fulfilled or until the body is dead.
>
> So he went on, month after month, year after year, divided against himself, striving for the day when the beauty of men should not be so acutely attractive to him, when the beauty of woman should move him instead. . . .
>
> But then, inevitably, it would recur again. There would come into a restaurant a strange Cornish type of man, with dark eyes like holes in his head, or like the eyes of a rat, and with dark, fine, rather stiff hair, and full, heavy, softly-strong limbs. Then again Birkin would feel the desire spring up in him, the desire to know this man, to have him, as it were to eat him, to take the very substance of him. And watching the strange, rather furtive, rabbit-like way in which the strong, softly-built man ate, Birkin would feel the rousedness burning in his own breast, as if this were what he wanted, as if the satisfaction of his desire lay in the body of the young, strong man opposite.
>
> And then in his soul would succeed a sort of despair, because this passion for a man had recurred in him. It was a deep misery to him. And it would seem as if he had always loved men, always and only loved men. And this was the greatest suffering to him. . . .
>
> This was the one and only secret he kept to himself, this secret of his passionate and sudden, spasmodic affinity for men he saw. He kept this secret even from himself. He knew what he felt, but he always kept the knowledge at bay. His a priori were: "I *should not* feel like this," and "It is the ultimate mark of my own deficiency, that I feel like this." Therefore, though he admitted everything, he never really faced the question. He never accepted the desire, and received it as part of himself. He always tried to keep it expelled from him.

Lawrence decided to keep Birkin's secret after all (as for Tolstoy's

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secret, maybe it could be made public almost at once because it came complete with a happy ending in Christian asceticism), and he excised the Prologue from its place at the beginning of *Women in Love.* The Prologue remained in manuscript till it was published in 1963.

Women in Love is, then, at least in fact a decapitated novel. It has splendid sustained episodes (especially the chapter "Water-Party," the best stretch of densely populated and thematically coherent narrative Lawrence ever wrote); it has the most intense love-affair in Lawrence's fiction, not a polarity or a blood-sympathy but the Dostoevskian torrent of ill-fated passion between Gudrun and Gerald (with Loerke—"like a rat in the river of corruption," says Birkin; like "the strange Cornish type of man . . . with the eyes of a rat" that the *ur*-Birkin of the Prologue yearned for; like Lawrence's fascinated impression of the prince of darkness Dostoevsky himself—the lurker waiting in the dark, all ears and eyes, for the heavens to fall); it has the great concluding scenes of death on the ice-mountains and unresolvable doubt in the survivor; and it has many mysteries or ambiguities of tone and structure that look, and up to a point really are, Dostoevskian—Europe at the end of its tether—but that seem to be also elisions and omissions of what Lawrence couldn't quite bring himself to say about more intimate questions. It is never, for instance, altogether clear what Birkin wants; nor is it altogether clear that Birkin doesn't entirely know what he wants; and the chapter "Gladiatorial," in which Birkin and Gerald wrestle naked, engages not only the two friends but the casuistical ingenuity of scores of Lawrence critics without nullifying everybody's suspicion that the explanation is simple, and would be simpler still if Lawrence had kept the bleak and brave Prologue and allowed his novel to flow unhappily out of it. At any rate, after *Women in Love,* Lawrence was finished as a novelist. The three "leadership" novels that follow would be politically offensive if they weren't as feeble as *Lady Chatterley's Lover;* and all four of them are as malicious and theoretical as Sir Joshua, Lawrence's caricature of Bertrand Russell in *Women in Love.*

Moore, however, doing a bit of criticism, rates *Lady Chatterley's Lover* very high. True, he has a reservation about the plot, which doesn't give Sir Clifford enough time for reading ("It would have been a stronger story if Lawrence had made Clifford's lack of sex the result of overintellectualization"), and he has a reservation about the "prose," which would be bad if it were thin and good if it were plump but confusingly is neither ("not yet the thinned, satiric writing most characteristic of that last period, but on the other hand it is not the full-bodied prose of the novels from *Sons and Lovers* to *The Plumed Serpent*"); nonetheless, "purely on its own merits" it is "one of the notable books of the century." Moore is a sort of dualist: something variously designated as prose or style or expression or language often finds its way, he believes, into Lawrence's books. *The Plumed Serpent,*

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for example, "contains some of Lawrence's finest prose," though not the "stylistic mastery" of *The Rainbow*. *Studies in American Literature* contains a "colloquial idiom" which—as thick and convex as the Coke-bottle lenses of a mad scientist's pince-nez—"lets through more intensity than the flat prose of scholarship usually transmits" (n.b. the scholarly caution of that adverb); whereas when Mabel Luhan proclaims her "semi-Lawrencean ideas" they "sound . . . rather hollow without Lawrence's magic of expression." One of the remarkable features of Lawrence's prose as he grew up from early childhood and kept on writing was, Moore notes, "his increasing skill in the use of language," though he never again "achieved the integration of art and idea that he manifested in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*." Inside this two-ply but integrated sarcophagus lies poor dead Lawrence grinding his teeth to powder.

Moore on (what else?) Lawrence's limitations as a literary critic: "he couldn't 'forgive Conrad for being so sad and for giving in.' He also said that he hated Strindberg, who seemed 'unnatural, forced, a bit indecent—a bit wooden, like Ibsen, a bit skin-erupty,' remarks indicating that in literary judgments Lawrence was at times somewhat limited." On his limitations as an art critic: "Lawrence—quite wrongly, as time has shown—carped at these paintings [murals by Rivera and Orozco]." On his limitations as a philosopher: "One of the new ideas or symbols Lawrence was trying to grasp through his writing was that of darkness; it was to become an important one to him, along with that of 'the blood.' Lawrence was never a formal philosopher; nevertheless . . ." (if the prince turned into a frog and nobody told him, he would have something like Moore's majestic presumptuousness).

Since Lawrence wasn't a "formal" psychologist either (writers are dilettantes but Moore hardly minds at all), it's surprising he did as well as he did. Give a cheer for Lawrence as essential windbag and kiddie-lit symbolist: " 'Sun' . . . embodies much of his essential doctrine, dramatized through symbolism," for example such a symbol as "the sleeping (sexually unawakened) woman." Kudos for fearless Lawrence as (sneaky) social critic: "some [of the poems] imply social criticism, as 'The American Eagle' ('Will you feed for ever on the cold meat of prosperity?')." Lawrence as (perhaps) co-sponsor of the hypothesis that personal or even business letters aren't necessarily incompatible with prose: "That letter . . . , which was written at a period when Lawrence was not regularly exercising his imaginative faculty [it was during his visit to Finland, where he got caught in a sauna], had the force of a creative essay. Lawrence perhaps realized, as Rilke did, that letters could be creative." Lawrence as (simultaneously) manure-spreader and sensitive plant: "he did a great deal of theorizing at that time which may have helped his growth as an artist." As implacable foe of prostheses and other crimes against

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nature: "It is ironic that D. H. Lawrence, of all men, should have gone to work for dealers in artificial limbs"; "Lawrence's disgust for the artificial, a disgust that could vanish in a wave of friendliness at a touch of nature, welled up when he received a summons to the bankruptcy court."

Lawrence wasn't only modern, he was modernistic. "In the latter half [of *The Rainbow*] there is a new Lawrence . . . the Lawrence who became modernistic along with Joyce and Proust"—as in Ursula's "grainfield episode with Skrebensky, which seems part early Stravinsky and part later Van Gogh, yet most originally Lawrencean." " 'The Rocking-Horse Winner' . . . again indicates Lawrence's modernness of method, for . . . he was among the first authors of his time who drew upon anthropology." "Here [in Lawrence's diamond-and-carbon letter to Edward Garnett],"

> in an important moment, a moment of culmination, Lawrence showed that he knew what he was doing, and why he was doing it. He had reached a plateau of understanding from which he could see his writing in relation to the world about him. It was a world whose thoughts had been shaped, were being shaped, by Darwin, Marx, Einstein, and Freud, whose influence no one could really evade. Artistically, it was a world that would soon belong to Stravinsky, Picasso, and Joyce. As Lawrence didn't take anything important from the Futurists, so he consciously took nothing from these artists—indeed, he cared little for their achievements—but once again, his work, like theirs, demonstrates a modernity of vision. . . .

Moore is encyclopedic in range but telegraphic in manner: he never takes the trouble to discuss or illustrate these influences and associations; roll-calls are enough, and the less sense the better. (It ought to be acknowledged that Moore is here and there if not by and large a robust writer, and as the names pour incontinently out he has occasional lapses of taste: for instance, describes Mrs. Luhan's husband as "the massive Indian-buck lover she had acquired" and, again, "her Indian-buck lover"; or romantically allows as how "Jessie Chambers was an almost classical case of frigidity"; but nobody's perfect, and very few are even modernistic.)

Anybody with an "essential doctrine" deserves such followers and will be sure as fate to get them. Tolstoy had them, an obnoxious cocklebur named Chertkov in particular; so did Jesus. Lawrence celebrated his Last Supper with the disciples at the Café Royal on a visit he made to London in 1924: "at one point Murry said, 'I love you, Lorenzo, but I won't promise not to betray you'—and finally the 'habitually temperate' Lawrence collapsed, sick and vomiting." Every now and then, as at the Last Supper, Lawrence did some

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strenuous recruiting for a utopian-anarchist commune of love and brotherhood, to be named Rananim, which he hoped to establish in Florida or somewhere else remote (where he himself would have been ineluctably more equal than the others). Moore's deficiencies of perception, proportion, tone, judgment in this crude book don't help; but most of the friendships and many of the events of Lawrence's life, once he had had the good sense to carry off the one woman in the world he couldn't beat down or turn into an echo or talk out of being a bossy, brassy woman, don't make for pleasant reading or contemplation either in Moore's book or wherever else they appear in print. When *The Intelligent Heart* was published twenty years ago (*The Priest of Love* is its most recent revision), Frieda wrote that it "reads almost like fiction, and a great deal is fiction to me:"

> Lawrence and I lived often for weeks and months in peace in the midst of a terrific turmoil and gossip that we were not aware of. So much spite against two unpretentious people who lived as simply as we did. But somehow it did not matter much; we went on our way in our world. A man's new ideas are not so easy to grasp right away and it makes people hostile. There were a few like Aldous and Maria Huxley who patiently listened.

And Lawrence was always on the lookout for listeners.

He was also always on the lookout for things to tell them, even at his pushiest. In the early 'twenties Lawrence was at the very bottom of his funk: his two best novels had fallen dead for their time, and he was trying without luck to find a way of making fiction out of leader-and-follower politics. His essay *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*—a jargon-stuffed, deliberately nutty, sporadically lively effort to correct what he considered Freud's moralistic attitude toward the unconscious—had been treated as a bad joke by reviewers; and Lawrence plunged ahead into *Fantasia of the Unconscious,* which begins with the three hysterical pages of its so-called Foreword:

> The present book is a continuation from *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious.* The generality of readers had better just leave it alone. The generality of critics likewise. I really don't want to convince anybody. It is quite in opposition to my whole nature. . . .
>
> I warn the generality of readers that this present book will seem to them only a rather more revolting mass of wordy nonsense than the last. . . .

Sixty pages farther on, unpacking his heart against universal education (which had spawned readers who had found the earlier essay a "revolting mass of wordy nonsense"), Lawrence thunders that "ideas" are "the most dangerous germs mankind has ever been injected with";

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but the *idea* of "ideas" starts to penetrate the murk of his panic, the wordy nonsense thins a little, and out of it all at last, for a moment, emerges the Lawrence we stay up late for:

> The idea, the actual idea, must rise ever fresh, ever displaced, like the leaves of a tree, from out of the quickness of the sap. . . . The tree of life is a gay kind of tree that is forever dropping its leaves and budding out afresh quite different ones. If the last lot were thistle leaves, the next lot may be vine. You can never tell with the tree of life.

Ideas, according to this exquisite little tree-aria, aren't good or bad (as old Leo or D. H. Rananim insists they are), they're growing or shed, live or dead.

Lawrence had at least half a claim on the phoenix-emblem he chose for himself: nothing could quite keep him in sackcloth and ashes. One of his books during the same period was *Sea and Sardinia,* which he wrote in six weeks, having taken no notes, after a week's visit to Sardinia from Sicily. The book has his only extensive non-fictional representation of Frieda ("the queen bee" or "q-b"), direct, unintimidated, enthusiastic, not without misgivings—

> "I like it! I like it!" cries the q-b.
> "But could you live here?" She would like to say yes, but daren't.

—and a detailed account of their winter journey through desolate landscapes in cold and damp, in general discomfort, with wretched food and minimal conveniences—one of the fine comic scenes in Lawrence is the description of his hiking about the hills in a fury at the primitive sanitary arrangements of the inhabitants of the village of Sorgono—

> And the q-b was angry with me for my fury.
> "Why are you so indignant! Anyone would think your moral self had been outraged! Why take it morally? You petrify that man at the inn by the very way you speak to him, *such* condemnation! Why don't you take it as it comes? It's all life."
> But no, my rage is black, black, black. Why, heaven knows. But I think it was because Sorgono had seemed so fascinating to me, when I imagined it beforehand. Oh, so fascinating! If I had expected nothing I should not have been so hit. Blessed is he that expecteth nothing for he shall not be disappointed.
> I cursed the degenerate aborigines, the dirty-breasted host who *dared* to keep such an inn, the sordid villagers who had the baseness to squat their beastly human nastiness in this upland valley. All my praise of the long stocking-cap—you remember?—vanished from my mouth. I cursed them all, and the q-b for an interfering female. . . .

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(but, back at the inn, the host takes a candle and leads them to the "stanza," the bare common-room, where "it was pitch-dark—but suddenly I saw a big fire of oak-root, a brilliant flamy, rich fire, and my rage in that second disappeared")—and not a "sight" to be seen ("Sights are an irritating bore") and no companions except everybody they met on the way, as among the group by the fireplace in Sorgono, all in hats and overcoats, talking while a whole kid is being roasted over the fire:

> "Signora!" said the girovago [wandering peddler]. "Do you understand Sardinian?"
>
> "I understand Italian—and some Sardinian," she replied rather hotly. "And I know that you are trying to laugh at us—to make fun of us."
>
> He laughed fatly and comfortably.
>
> "Ah, Signora," he said. "We have a language that you wouldn't understand—not one word. . . ."
>
> He leaned up to me, laughing.
>
> "It is the language we use when the women are buying things and we don't want them to know what we say: me and him—"
>
> "Oh," said I. "I know. We have that language in England. It is called thieves' Latin—*Latino dei furbi.*"
>
> The men at the back suddenly laughed, glad to turn the joke against the forward girovago. He looked down his nose at me. But seeing I was laughing without malice, he leaned to me and said softly, secretly:
>
> "What is your affair then? What affair is it, yours?"
>
> "How? What?" I exclaimed, not understanding.
>
> "*Che genere di affari?* What sort of business?"
>
> "How—*affari?*" said I, still not grasping.
>
> "What do you *sell*?" he said, flatly and rather spitefully. "What goods?"
>
> "I don't sell anything," replied I, laughing to think he took us for some sort of strolling quacks or commercial travellers.
>
> "Cloth—or something," he said cajolingly, slyly, as if to worm my secret out of me.
>
> "But nothing at all. Nothing at all," said I. "We have come to Sardinia to see the peasant costumes—" I thought that might sound satisfactory.
>
> "Ah, the costumes!" he said, evidently thinking I was a deep one. . . .

The Lawrences weren't tourists, and Lawrence was always at his best with people who didn't know who he was, where he could walk right in and talk and watch without feeling obliged to make pronouncements on the instant; talking and listening and getting angry

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(" 'You who look for dirty women,' say I, 'find dirty women everywhere' "), observing the religious procession that inspires a characteristic ode on women's clothes—

> . . . little girl-children with long skirts of scarlet cloth down to their feet, green-banded near the bottom: with white aprons bordered with vivid green and mingled colour: having little scarlet, purple-bound, open boleros over the full white shirts: and black head-cloths folded across their little chins, just leaving the lips clear, the face framed in black. Wonderful little girl-children, perfect and demure in the stiffish, brilliant costume, with black head-dress! Stiff as Velasquez princesses! . . .

(whereas the men have "hard dangerous thighs" or "close breeches on their compact thighs"), toy-size donkeys as beasts of burden on the road, maskers in drag marching like marionettes in the street, a man playing a desperate game with a dog and a piece of bread, a little boy gazing wonderingly upward at the source of the slop-water that has splashed him, a little girl being sick while her parents don't bother to look sympathetic ("Sympathy would only complicate matters, and spoil that strange, remote virginal quality. The q-b says it is largely stupidity"), the "brisk and defiant" peasant women of Sardinia, the fellow-passenger's wife running along the platform with a "wild shriek, 'Madonna!' " as she is left behind by the train—

> The poor fat husband has been all the time on the little outside platform at the end of the carriage, holding out his hand to her and shouting frenzied scolding to her and frenzied yells for the train to stop. And the train has not stopped. And she is left—left on that God-forsaken station in the waning light.
>
> So, his face all bright, his eyes round and bright as two stars, absolutely transfigured by dismay, chagrin, anger and distress, he comes and sits in his seat, ablaze, stiff, speechless. . . .

—the ship's old wood ("the paint wore away long ago"), "old oaken wood, so sea-fibred . . . so sound, so beautiful . . . rustless, life-born, living-tissued old wood: rustless as flesh is rustless."

Seven years later, doing what Moore calls "the thinned, satiric writing . . . of that last period," Lawrence sums up the "pa-assion" of *The Forsyte Saga* (with a "doggy" image he had tried and failed to manage a year or so earlier in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*):

> Mr. Galsworthy's treatment of passion is really rather shameful. The whole thing is doggy to a degree. The man has a temporary "hunger"; he is "on the heat" as they say of dogs. The heat passes.

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> It's done. Trot away, if you're not tangled. Trot off, looking shamefacedly over your shoulder. People have been watching! Damn them! But never mind, it'll blow over. Thank God, the bitch is trotting in the other direction. She'll soon have another trail of dogs after her. That'll wipe out my traces. Good for that! Next time I'll get properly married and do my doggishness in my own house.

A year after wiping up Galsworthy (and less than a year to go), he expresses his polite stupefaction at the young English painter who has just said to him, "You do agree, don't you, that technically we know about all there is to know about painting?":

> I looked at him in amazement. It was obvious that a new-born babe was as fit to paint pictures as he was. He knew technically all there was to know about pictures: all about two-dimensional and three-dimensional composition, also the colour-dimension and the dimension of values in that view of composition which exists apart from form: all about the value of planes, the value of the angle in planes, the different values of the same colour on different planes: all about edges, visible edges, tangible edges, intangible edges: all about the nodality of form-groups, the constellating of mass-centres: all about the relativity of mass, the gravitation and the centrifugal force of masses, the resultant of the complex impinging of masses, the isolation of a mass in the line of vision: all about pattern, line pattern, edge pattern, tone pattern, colour pattern, and the pattern of moving planes: all about texture, impasto, surface, and what happens at the edge of the canvas: also which is the aesthetic centre of the canvas, the dynamic centre, the effulgent centre, the kinetic centre, the mathematical centre, and the Chinese centre: also the points of departure in the foreground, and the points of disappearance in the background, together with the various routes between these points, namely, as the crow flies, as the cow walks, as the mind intoxicated with knowledge reels and gets there: all about spotting, what you spot, which spot, on the spot, how many spots, balance of spots, recedence of spots, spots on the explosive vision and spots on the co-ordinative vision: all about literary interest and how to hide it successfully from the policeman: all about photographic representation . . .

—and much more.[4] Some critics give stock-market quotations (sometimes exact and eternal), some give advice to young writers on the

[4] *Anna Karenina* may still have been ringing in Lawrence's ears. "[Mikhailov] . . . *often heard the word 'technique' and could never understand what was meant by* it. He knew it was supposed to mean a mechanical ability to paint and draw quite independent of the subject-matter. He had often noticed, as now when his picture was being praised, that technique was contrasted with inner quality, as though it were possible to paint well something that was bad." Certainly Lawrence remem-

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doggy trail of technique ("Don't say 'dim lands of peace' "), some deliver formal orations on the passing of culture, community, and the Church Universal. Lawrence writes out of the fullness and relish of his curiosity about creatures and created things, whether he likes them or not (more often he writes about those he likes—Cooper, Verga, Hemingway—though he will scribble away eagerly about any book that comes to hand), as if he can never have enough of them.

Lawrence was once a little tiny boy in a mining village in England, who preferred playing with girls and whom the boys made fun of—

Dicky Dicky Denches
Plays with the wenches

—whom his mother loved (and who loved his mother) not wisely but too well; a frail boy who early almost died of pneumonia and had "bronchial" illnesses for the rest of his life; read everything; fell in love first with a spiritual girl who exalted and balked and puzzled him, later with a physical woman who seemed to rescue him for the work he was destined to do.

Barely out of his 'teens he had begun writing the best short stories in English. In "The White Stocking," written when he was twenty-one, his powers are already manifest, especially his power to represent the intensity, momentariness, wariness, touchiness, unreliability of feeling, the dance of feeling—

> The dance was over. Adams was detained. Elsie found herself beside Whiston. There was something shapely about him as he sat, about his knees and his distinct figure, that she clung to. It was as if he had enduring form. She put her hand on his knee. . . .
>
> "You don't want to be too free with Sam Adams," said Whiston cautiously, suffering. "You know what he is."
>
> "How, free?" she asked.
>
> "Why—you don't want to have too much to do with him."
>
> She sat silent. He was forcing her into consciousness of her position. But he could not get hold of her feelings, to change them. She had a curious, perverse desire that he should not.
>
> "I like him," she said.
>
> "What do you find to like in him?" he said, with a hot heart.

---

bered Mikhailov when he was writing Ursula's definitive riposte to Loerke in *Women in Love*:

> Loerke snorted with rage.
>
> "A picture of myself!" he repeated in derision. "Wissen sie, gnädige Frau, that is a Kunstwerk, a work of art. It is a work of art, it is a picture of nothing, of absolutely nothing. It has nothing to do with anything but itself. . . ."
>
> Ursula . . . was furious. . . .
>
> "It isn't a word of it true, of all this harangue you have made me," she replied flatly. "The horse is a picture of your own stock, stupid brutality, and the girl was a girl you loved and tortured and then ignored."

Mikhailov and Ursula would have been struck by Moore's critical term "prose."

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"I don't know—but I like him," she said.

She was immutable. He sat feeling heavy and dulled with rage. He was not clear as to what he felt. He sat there unliving whilst she danced. And she, distracted, lost to herself between the opposing forces of the two men, drifted. . . .

—not the fixed directions and grossly signaled changes of direction that fiction teaches us, despite our own experience, to regard as feeling, but how it *feels* to feel. For readers impressed by that waxworks nonpareil "The Dead," Lawrence's "The Shadow in the Rose Garden" is also about a man fighting a losing battle for his wife with the ghost of her former lover, but this one a crisp and downright account in which, though things get troubled and very disagreeable, yet nothing is settled and something remains possible (if only lifelong recrimination) and not a flake of symbolic snow falls anywhere in either of the British Isles. The elite list could be extended to a dozen or so: among them, "Tickets, Please," "New Eve and Old Adam" (a fictional go at Frieda, and Lawrence isn't so friendly as in *Sea and Sardinia*), "The Prussian Officer," "The Horse-Dealer's Daughter," "Samson and Delilah."

Ford Madox Ford, who "discovered" Lawrence for *The English Review,* used to say that every man has a novel in him (though Ford, busily turning out a French novel or a James novel or a Conrad novel, never took the time to write his own). *Sons and Lovers* is Lawrence's novel: an astonishing piece of luck for posterity that at just this moment he had written enough fiction, and was free enough of his dead mother and of Jessie Chambers, and happy enough honeymooning with Frieda, and confident enough of his powers and his future, to make the truest statement in English about family life, mother-love, growing up, "lad-and-girl love," death in the family, staying alive.

He had read the Russians, and now he began writing a novel that eventually split into *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* (he called it *The Sisters,* and at first thought of it as a pot-boiler!); he began to understand, with an eye on the Russians, that he could do something new in English fiction. The great Russians wrote novels about living souls and dying generations (they knew social types and drawing-rooms and ball-rooms nearly as well as Jane Austen did, but they had grander ambitions), about women who didn't merely wait for the right man, about conflicts for which society hadn't yet provided rules or solutions (Lawrence had of course read Hardy, who could be a resource in such matters but was small-scale by comparison with the Russians). In that famous letter to Edward Garnett, Lawrence trotted out a rocking-horse named Futurism-carbon-allotrope-diamond, whereupon Moore and all the other rocking-horse winners climbed into the saddle and rocked; but the real horse was locked away, as Logan Speirs suggests, in the Russian stables.

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"Look! we have come through!" Lawrence exulted in a book of poems about the triumphant beginning of his marriage ("They may have come through," grumped the disaffected Bertrand Russell, no longer a candidate for Rananim, "but I don't see why I should look"); but feelings are unreliable, they spring up from nowhere, they revive, and "a man can no more slay a living desire in him, than he can prevent his body from feeling heat and cold." Lawrence completed *The Rainbow* in joyful confidence; two years later completed *Women in Love* in the stubborn need to finish something important he no longer quite believed in—not only this novel but his capacity as a novelist. He could neither slay his living desires nor say them out (as after *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy, unable to slay his living desires, resolved to spend the rest of his life denouncing them), and so (like Tolstoy) he lost access to the sources of his fiction. He became a novelist in name only, he wrote about other people, about everything (except himself) that interested him, about himself as a more or less public figure, about books and places with journalistic insouciance and speed, and he became in fact a writer.

Writing flourished everywhere in the nineteenth century; but if one considers the uniqueness and force, the unspecialized authority, of literature, the only writer of the nineteenth century was Tolstoy. In this century too, there have been poets, novelists, tale-tellers, essayists, critics, even, God help us! men of letters; but so far the only writer of the century—and there's very little time left—is Lawrence.

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ROGER SALE

Tennyson as Great Poet

In *The Fall of Camelot* John D. Rosenberg says Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* "is one of the four or five indisputably great long poems in our language"; Tennyson was "the greatest poet of the nineteenth century"; in reading the *Idylls* "one passes through hundreds of lines of some of the most beautiful blank verse in English"; the poem is "the subtlest anatomy of the failure of ideality in our literature"; of Lancelot that "it is his greatness as a character that he compels us, in our attempts at explanation, to enlarge our terms of moral definition"; "Tennyson could of course tell a story perfectly well."[1] Dr. Leavis often said the essential gesture of criticism is "This is so, is it not?" Of Rosenberg's claims for the *Idylls of the King* it must be said that they are not so; indeed, they are preposterous. Since Rosenberg wrote *The Darkening Glass,* a useful book on Ruskin, and a selection of Swinburne's poetry that made a good effort to say what could be claimed for him, one does not want simply to dismiss him. Yet the *Idylls* as "one of the four or five indisputably great long poems in our language"—even if you take the wanton "indisputably" out of there you still have something almost childish in its extravagance. How could such words, this book, come to be written?

Arthur? Henry James thought he was "rather a prig" in Tennyson's hands; Swinburne thought he had been reduced "to the level of a wittol, Guinevere to the level of a woman of intrigue, and Lancelot to the level of a 'co-respondent.'" Hopkins thought the poem should have been called *Charades from the Middle Ages,* Swineburne offered "Idylls of the Prince Consort." So Rosenberg is being ingenuous when he speaks of "the road leading back to Camelot" as though at some point people had really wanted to travel that road:

> But the path will not be found until the bias of the modernist myth is broken. English poetry, so the orthodoxy holds, reached a dead-end with the Victorians. If it is to revive at all, it must develop, in Leavis' words, "along some other line than that running from the Romantics through Tennyson, Swineburne, *A Shropshire Lad,* and Rupert Brooke." Such a line, of course, never existed; Leavis has yoked the living to the dead and practices a kind of guilt by moribund association. He did not see, and Eliot as practicing poet could not afford to see, that the great divide in English poetry occurred in

[1] THE FALL OF CAMELOT, by *John D. Rosenberg.* Harvard University. $6.95.

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> 1798, with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads,* and not between the death of Tennyson in 1892 and the appearance of *The Waste Land* in 1922.

To refer to Eliot and Leavis as "the orthodoxy" is willfully to ignore the large and enduring efforts made in American universities to pretend that Eliot and Leavis do not exist; it is also to lay the current attitude toward the *Idylls* at their feet, where it obviously does not belong. To say that the ghost of Tennyson breathes everywhere in Eliot's verse is to repeat, without their cogency, arguments made by Benjamin DeMott and Hugh Kenner over ten years ago. But the real joker is that 1798 dividing line in English poetry, not because it isn't true that such a line exists, but because anyone who seriously knows the way it is true must be responsible to English poetry before 1798 more than Rosenberg here knows how to be.

The great long poems in English are *Troilus and Criseyde, The Faerie Queene,* and *Paradise Lost,* and you can choose between the first and third of these to find "the subtlest anatomy of the failure of ideality in our literature." After these three, there are some others that can earn someone or other's unhysterical claim to being great poems: *Beowulf, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Hero and Leander, The Dunciad, Jerusalem, The Prelude, Don Juan,* though the flaws or limitations of all these poems are so manifest that one recognizes a real gap between them and the first three. After that, as far as I can see, you can do pretty much as you like, and obviously what most people would like is to shorten the length of a "long poem" to include "Upon Appleton House" or "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" or *Four Quartets* or some other favorite of theirs. But to enter Tennyson's *Idylls* into the list is to fail to see how much went out of the long poem about the time of the "great dividing line" of 1798. I'm convinced, furthermore, that the reason for this failure is that many people who commit themselves to "study" nineteenth-century poetry treat it as an adequate body of material, which it is, and forget or never learn that the great period of English poetry is from Spenser to Pope, the great period of English prose from Fielding and Johnson to Lawrence. I would sooner reread either Daniel's *Musophilus* or Collins' *Armadale* before trying to go attentively through Tennyson's *Idylls* again. And I know why, too.

The underpinnings of Rosenberg's book, then, on any or all the grounds mentioned above, are very shaky. But that is true of lots of books that redeem themselves in their local efforts, so it is time to do some quoting:

> His [Lancelot's] love for his king is as absolute as his love for his queen, and it is his tragedy that loyalty to one must be disloyalty to the other:

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> The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
> In battle with the love he bare his lord,
> Had marred his face, and marked it ere his time.
>
> The whole force of this passage lies in the juxtaposed "great *and* guilty"; the guilt of the love is indisputable, but so too is its greatness, by which Tennyson means not only intensity but nobility.

The "whole force" of this passage may lie where Rosenberg says, but the trip of the verse proclaims in every syllable that that force is slight indeed. Anyone accustomed to the heavy dosage of alliteration in the *Idylls* knows that it is sonority that connects "great/guilty," "battle/bare" and "marred/marked," and the redundancy of that third pair is indicative of the way words are chosen and used in the poem. "Great" and "guilty" have precisely this kind of affinity; it is the sort of thing Byron did a lot of in his Oriental Tales, getting his mood formulas down pat because he was writing quickly, late at night, and, often, drunk.

Or look at this, describing an early passage:

> . . . and in six lines of utmost economy Tennyson introduces two important characters and glances ahead to the end of the *Idylls*:
>
> And Gawain went, and breaking into song
> Sprang out, and followed by his flying hair
> Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw;
> But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
> And there half-heard; the same that afterward
> Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

What can "utmost economy" mean except that Tennyson throws two characters into six lines before moving on? Certainly the cluster of verbs to describe Gawain all come out of a single verb-bin, and Tennyson, had economy been his interest, could have used two or three rather than four; as for the "foreshadowing" of Modred's story, it is, for the fluent Tennyson, rather clumsily introduced. As far as I can see Rosenberg is just not looking at the verse he quotes, and hoping we won't either. So too with something like this:

> The three characters in the *Idylls* who suffer madness—Pelleas, Balin, and Lancelot—all flee the court and withdraw into wild woods or wastelands. Only Lancelot emerges from the ordeal alive. His survival results from an act of will in consonance with a gift of grace. He strays from the common path but finds the strength to cut his way out of the wilderness. Balin and Pelleas are victims of a prior flaw which turns their wills against themselves and renders them powerless to resist the hostile landscape that finally entombs them, and that is at once their enemy and themselves.

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The tone here implies something meaningful is being said, when in fact it is only plot summarizing and classifying.

Over and over the word is taken from the deed, the description of fact is taken for statement of interest and value. Here is Tennyson describing Vivien:

> "Great Master, do ye love me?" he was mute.
> And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
> Writhed toward him, slided up his knee and sat,
> Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
> Together, curved an arm about his neck,
> Clung like a snake. . .

"Writhed," "slided," "twined," "curved," and "clung"—more verbs ladled out, a typical piece of Victorian literary sensuality, one would have thought. Here is Rosenberg's comment:

> Vivien here combines the roles of Eve and Satan. She lusts for Merlin's forbidden knowledge and in grasping his heel, like the serpent in Genesis who bruises man's heel, she brings death into the world.

The verse just is not confronted, is only fodder for inflating and deflecting commentary. Could it be that Rosenberg wants to put Eliot and Leavis on their heads because they cared what the verse does, and inquired into the relation of "Behind" to "Together" in the above passage? Hollow feet? One sees what Tennyson wants, but surely one must first see how he does it before wandering off after Satan and Eve.

The *Fall of Camelot* is like this throughout, large points and small. There is "cyclic time" and "apocalyptic time" in the poem, which is to say that Arthur comes and Arthur goes, that many middle idylls take place in summer, that all hell breaks loose in the heavens in "The Holy Grail." Character and landscape often merge, says Rosenberg; indeed they do. This is really a symbolist poem, he goes on—as indeed it is, but that is no demonstration that it is a good poem, and dragging in Yeats's "The Symbolism of Poetry" won't help Tennyson any more than it helps the early Yeats. It all seems, I'm afraid, another instance of accuracy being taken for adequacy, of academic acceptance of the mediocre being taken for broad-mindedness; one can almost hear a colleague of Rosenberg's saying that, Well, no, this new-found love of the *Idylls* is not in his personal line, and adding that, Well, no, Rosenberg wasn't very convincing, was he, but, Well, after all, who am I to tell him how to do his work?

Of course Rosenberg's descriptions are accurate enough; Vivien is like Satan and like Eve. As to being adequate to Tennyson and the

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Idylls, two things need mentioning right off. First, for all the planing and honing Tennyson did to make the poem seem like a whole, the fact is that he was reluctant to write it at all, and more reluctant still to see his "idylls" as a single poem; the unity of the poem is a drawing-board unity, the coming balancing the passing, the gloom getting greater as the poem goes on, etc. Still, it is unity enough were the parts better than they are. The second fact about the poem is that at the heart of the poem is sex, and Tennyson is no better about sex than one might have imagined. We learn early in the poem about Lancelot and Guinevere, we peer at them with Balin, we snicker and sneer with Vivien, we lament the naïveté of Elaine and the nun who talks with Guinevere in the monastery because they know so little about forbidden passion. As for Lancelot and Guinevere, since we get them only in furtive glimpses, we are allowed only the results of sex, like Guinevere at East Lynne:

> "yea, lord," she said,
> "Thy hopes are mine," and saying that, she choked,
> And sharply turned about to hide her face,
> Past to her chamber, and there flung herself
> Down on the great King's couch, and writhed upon it,
> And clenched her fists till they bit the palm,
> And shrieked out "Traitor" to the unhearing wall,
> Then flashed into wild tears, and rose again,
> And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

The only sexual passion is shame, and since shame is the reality beneath all the appearances Rosenberg is so fond of chronicling for us, there are only two alternatives. The first is officialese:

> To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
> To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deed,
> Until they won her; for indeed I know
> Of no more subtle master under heaven
> Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
> Not only to keep down the base in man,
> But teach high thought, and amiable words
> And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
> And love of truth, and all that makes a man.

Indeed, the *Idylls of the Prince Consort.* The second alternative is an innocence that can circumvent shame only in a longing for death:

> Sweet is true love though given in vain, in vain;
> And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:

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I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.
Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if Death be sweeter, let me die.

Could anything be worse? Are these passages not reason enough for Eliot and Pound to try, with whatever results, to start over on another footing?

So let us concede that a lot of the poem is very bad; it is as though Tolkien had written only about Arwen and the men of Gondor. Nothing in Tennyson's poetic habit can warn him, either, since fluency and speed are his staples, so when he starts going bad in writing about some sexual disaster, nothing can stop him. Conversely, however, when he begins rolling well, he is apt to go on well for some time:

There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarred with a hundred wintry water-courses—
Storm at the top, and when we gained it storm
Round us, and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arm and gloomed: so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Part black, part whitened with the bones of men,
Nor to be crost, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where linked with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.

No need to say this is as nothing beside the explorations of the fallen angels in Hell in Book II of *Paradise Lost,* no need because it attempts no such profundity of description, does not imagine a description can be profound, indeed. It is good purplish romance verse, the black turning into "part black, part whitened with the bones of men," the landscape enchanting without Tennyson's calling attention to his technical virtuosity. Or here is this, in somewhat the same vein:

And fainter onward, like wild birds that change
Their season in the night and wail their way
From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream
Shrilled; but in going mingled with dim cries
Far in the moonlight haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sacked by night,

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> When all is lost, and wife and child with wail
> Pass to new lords.

All very literary, but incantatory, able to merge Tennyson's temperamental gloominess with his romance/heroic material to make a landscape; if "dream Shrilled" is the unfortunate consequence of reaching too casually for an elegant variation for the ghost of Gawain, it cannot do more than mar the effect. It's like Tolkien—perhaps Tolkien learned how to do it from Tennyson—close to his descriptive best.

Among middle and late nineteenth-century long poems, *Idylls of the King* can occasionally stand out because Tennyson can often generate powerful landscapes out of his feelings, and do this better than Morris or Thomson. But to say this is to remind us of the obvious fact that Tennyson, to say nothing of Hopkins, generated better landscapes in short poems, where such poetry probably belongs. After the pastoral habits of feeling that had so wonderfully sustained and been sustained by Spenser and Milton had fallen into sorry disuse, it remained for nineteenth-century poets to make symbolic landscapes, so little aware were they of all that had been lost by the time the tradition had gotten down to them, though it could still haunt Wordsworth and Coleridge. Since Wordsworth could also be haunted by his childhood fears and write great passages out of that hauntedness, it is perhaps no wonder that poets later in the century did not fully realize how personal and, in its way, special Wordsworth's poetry was. The symbolic landscapes of the others were Spenserian, or Miltonic, or Wordsworthian, but almost always literary, at their best yielding something like the (to me) magnificent *The Triumph of Life,* but seldom able to get much better than "The Lotos-Eaters" or "Ode to the Nightingale," good poems, poems that will always be read, but too static, too fanciful, too simply works of mood, to be great poems or the source of great poetry in others. There are fine things in the later Tennyson, in Swinburne, in some of the less garrulous Browning, but poetry based on a haunting sense of loss and defeat really doesn't have many ways to turn, and certainly is insufficient to sustain a long poem. The language of mood and the language of nonsense begin to merge, which is why "Twas brillig and the slithy toves" is a very representative poem of its time, and why Hopkins is still so exciting; he knew, as Pound and Eliot learned later, what had happened to the language.

Some of the above is obvious, some reflects personal preferencs—no matter. The problem is one of stance more than conclusions. If one has a seminar to teach in "Victorian Poetry" then sooner or later one is going to wonder about *Idylls of the King,* and since the stance of seminars is based almost entirely on the idea of accurate description, why not go ahead and do it for a term; all that drawing-board

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unity to be described, all that modernity to be uncovered, all those invitations to thoughtlessness to be accepted, all that, plus "The Holy Grail" and "The Passing of Arthur," which are worth anyone's reading more than once. Rosenberg says he studied the poem in a seminar of Jerome Buckley's, and now conducts the seminar himself—and if "Victorian Poetry" is still a subject to be considered alongside the "Victorian Novel" and "Victorian Prose," all will go smoothly, the machinery being self-regarding and self-perpetuating. Of course we'll have to be stern about Eliot and Leavis, and with students who were never told why Eliot and Leavis are great critics, but that is fun by now, something to be done in the name of keeping standards up at the same time one is being historically cosmopolitan. Anyone who squirms will be told to buck up; anyone who denounces the whole enterprise will not last long. After a few years of this the smugness is complete. Here's Auden saying that Tennyson "had the finest ear, perhaps, of any English poet; he was also undoubtedly the stupidest." Here is Rosenberg replying that Auden's remark "is so richly absurd that I have in time grown fond of it." Well, in time, it would seem, Rosenberg can grow fond of almost anything, blind to almost anything, too. There are few statements of Auden's that I would simply endorse, and this one seems to me suspect, since Tennyson's ear was excellent only in hearing sounds he himself could utter, and since Tennyson wasn't all that dumb. But Auden's stance is the right one entirely, and, standing there, he could produce, among other things, his excellent *Nineteenth Century Minor British Poets* anthology. Rosenberg has nothing like that to show, and the more one imagines the journey he took to get from *The Darkening Glass* to *The Fall of Camelot* the more one knows he is no longer interested in trying.

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J. E. CHAMBERLIN

Radical Conservatism

Suum esse conservare. Like a logarithmic table, the formula is quite useless without a series of what the mathematicians call "arguments," which may be applied to it, and which complete its function. These arguments must be legitimate, of course; if one asks for the logarithm of a potato, one is sure to be disappointed. The logarithm of 7, on the other hand, is more readily discovered. Spinoza's list of arguments consists of various (though by no means all) aspects of life. Ernst Robert Curtius[1] has a rather different list, which includes traditions of literature, and those curious social objectifications that we call culture. And Curtius is correct, indeed almost uniquely correct, in his use of this model, for rather than applying the conservative formula to these traditions and cultures, he does precisely the opposite, applying these traditions and cultures to the formula, and reading off the results with almost mechanical sureness. In this rests his authority; or, at least, his illusion of authority.

The distinction is a nice one, but important, for Curtius was fascinated by the concept of critical authority. "There is no method," he remarked (quoting T. S. Eliot), "but to be very intelligent." That he most certainly was, and his intellect, combined with his clear sense of the legitimate argument, enabled him to achieve a critical authority of unusual dimensions. The volume of *Essays on European Literature,* which is now finely translated into English by Michael Kowal, is an anthology of work written over a period of about thirty years, from 1924 to 1952, and collected by Curtius himself. The essays display the variety of interest, breadth of learning, and power of mind for which he had become famous in what Kowal calls his "magisterial examination of medieval poetics and rhetoric," *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages.* In addition, these essays provide him with a forum in which to expound a passionate commitment to his ideal of European culture, with an intensity which (as he said of Ramón Pérez de Ayala) "springs from the tension between native roots and a cosmopolitan attitude of spirit," and with an intelligence and wit which give the essays a compelling charm. But he does have a method.

The method is, like Curtius himself, by no means simply defined. Magisterial he is, but *magister ludi,* ever conscious that *ludus* means both "school" and "game." Much of this volume is taken up with the game, just as much of the earlier was taken up with the school, and

1 ESSAYS ON EUROPEAN LITERATURE, by *E. R. Curtius.* Translated by Michael Kowal. Princeton University. $20.00.

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Curtius is clever enough to combine enthusiasm, fitness, and the rules of play, as he works us towards an appreciation of his critical game. The game is not one which can be lost, exactly, because it is unending; but it can be spoiled, and it is disconcerting how easy it is to find oneself trying to find the logarithm of a potato, or (along with Taine) reading great works as "signs" or "expressions" of their cultural milieu. Curtius is quick to blow the whistle; but he is also quick to repeat Charles Du Bos's unsettling remark on what a splendid inspiration it was "that Ibsen should have made Hedda Gabler's petit bourgeois husband an assistant professor of the history of civilization."

Fundamentally, Curtius affirms a conservative, organic theory of literature and the arts. To do so, he assumes an equally conservative, equally organic response to life and society. This is, to pick up my earlier figure, his central formula, which defines the function upon which he will rely. And like the logarithmic table, it needs to have its base established.

To a certain extent, Curtius reformulates what he refers to as "the Roman function of continuity . . . the fundamental law of life that applied throughout Antiquity; the law, according to which the sanction for all new creations was in the traditional works from which they derived and to which they had to refer." "Literature without tradition," he notes in his first (1927) essay on T. S. Eliot, "is destiny without history—uncomprehended, unpossessed." His essay on Virgil provides the most sustained application of this principle, and serves as well to emphasize Curtius' deep respect for "occasions." He has written both in this volume (in his essay on "Goethe as Critic") and elsewhere (in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*) on occasional poetry, or poetry which has, in his view, an "objective content," and is thereby usefully opposed to mere "self-expression," or poetic slobber. But that is only part of the story. Curtius' respect for "occasions" concentrates heavily on their creation of a public consciousness about something or someone; on their function as symbols, or even magical events. He quotes approvingly one of Hofmannsthal's aphorisms: "Situations are symbolic; it is the weakness of men today that they treat things analytically and hence dissolve their magic." It is in the nature of such situations or events that they are, in Coleridge's words, "always themselves a part of that, the whole of which they are representative"; and that they, like the rituals of magic, establish a correspondence with the creative energies of societies, a correspondence which transcends sociological explanations of cause and effect. They emphasize rather the conservative "truth" that the whole is greater than, or at least different from, the sum of its parts, and provide the inspiration for the flowering of a renewed cultural consciousness. The metaphor is, of course, significant, for it confirms the idea of society, and the literature of that society, as organically constituted, and provides the

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model for criticism as a new "biology of tradition." Curtius was fond of quoting Georg Simmel's observation that "life is at the same time always more than life," and of concluding that "the vital functions (of life) are realized in objective laws we call culture." And so, it is especially appropriate that "anniversaries (such as Goethe's, Dante's Augustine's, Virgil's) that move to the rhythm of millennia should exhort us to reflection" for, "rightly understood," they can be

> landmark[s] in the great mysterious movement of Western self-consciousness: in the dim unfolding of a process that would be memorable even if its struggle to be born occurred only as the dream of our highest, as the ineffable word of our best spirits—a process of integration and restoration of the Occident.

It is to the "highest and best spirits" of the European literary and intellectual tradition that Curtius directs our attention. Such spirits draw authority to themselves, and it is such authority that the critic must try to elucidate, and may eventually even claim. This authority, however, is less active than passive; and it

> should not be confused with either leadership or power. The essence of authority consists in the fact that it operates without conscious exercise and without challenge. It springs up mysteriously and is then simply there as by a natural process of development. Leadership is striven for and striven against. Will and resistance are of its essence. The leader acts, authority rules. It rules in the sense of "le roi règne, il ne gouverne pas." The monarchy is the archetype of all genuine authority.

He is writing here about Hofmannsthal, and about what he calls the "restoration principle of conservative-revolutionary thinking," an antidote for the "confused aspiration" and (what Goethe termed) the "sansculottism" or "graphoclastic rage" which are in Curtius' opinion "the intellectual situation of the age," and whereby

> nothing that has been said heretofore is to be held valid, everything that once was wise is to be regarded as foolish, that which was salutary as harmful, that which for a long time proved beneficial as by now actually a hindrance.

It is the business of literature to "represent and clarify" this confused aspiration "within the framework of a phenomenology of human existence." And it is the business of criticism to carry this process still further, to raise it to another power, and to become the "literature of literature." The "framework" for this "phenomenology" is radically conservative.

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There is little question that the inspiration for this critical construct is to be found in political theory. Curtius is fairly honest about this, suggesting in his essay on "The French Novel" that "the transfer of political concepts to art and literature is a nineteenth-century French mode of thought," deriving from the time of the French Revolution, from which point we begin to "speak of intellectual, artistic, religious *movements*." The formulators of the conservative response to life and society which informs Curtius' critical method were, to use his own catalogue, "Rivarol, Burke, Joseph de Maistre, Karl Ludwig von Haller." Their response was opposed to those versions of "high-state" idealism which held some sway at the time, and which effectively identified liberty with obedience to the law. But it is not laws, whether social or aesthetic, which are to be prior, according to Curtius' revitalized conservatism, but rather the rule of law. This "rule" is sanctioned by authority (and to a certain though not benumbing extent, by tradition), and it is accepted by the right-thinking simply by virtue of "the splendor of its legitimate sway,"

> Por sí se cumple, más allá del gusto
>
> Complete in itself, beyond taste
> (Jorge Guillén, translated by Curtius in 1951)

How is this legitimacy to be confirmed? Once again, the formula is conservative. In a recent essay on Edmund Burke, the historian J. H. Plumb noted that "Burke believed that wisdom was instinctive and religious rather than rational or intellectual." Plumb skews the description, for he does not much like Burke, and certainly does not like many of his disciples. Nonetheless, his sense is accurate enough, in drawing attention to the primacy of instinct and intuition in what the conservative would call an intelligent human response. Curtius, too, refused to accept the priority of rational response, taking great care to emphasize the religious traditions within which so many of his subjects write, and which define their particular perspectives and sensibilities; and he insisted that "the fundamental act of criticism consists in irrational contact." At this point, the profound scepticism that is also a part of the conservative heritage enters, and Curtius cautions that

> criticism, after all, always remains a risk. Evaluation cannot be grounded. The ground exists, no doubt, but only as intuition. This can leap across as a spark. It can be transmitted, but not communicated. That is the beauty of criticism. It is an act of creative intellectual freedom. Of course intuition can be subsequently motivated. But this motivation will only convince those who are already favorably disposed. . . . True criticism never seeks to prove, it seeks only to show. . . .

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> But I do not wish to be misunderstood. Intuition is an unfortunate term. It is constantly in the mouths of people who are otherwise starving. I am "against intellectual nourishment through intuition," to use Franz Blei's estimable coinage. What we would like, after all, is that intuition and intelligence should be brought together.

Nevertheless, his scepticism cuts both ways, and he emphasized in an early preface to *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (which appeared as an "announcement" in the Heidelberg review *Die Wandlung* in 1945, but was not published with the book in 1948) that "there is no method in the humanistic disciplines. Or only one, which cannot be taught: the cooperation of instinct and intelligence."

The question of method is insistent, so perhaps we should turn to it now. The products of man's imagination, and in particular the arts, depend to one degree or another upon reality. And criticism stands in about the same relationship to those imaginative creations which constitute its apparent subject. This is the general scheme, of which the relationship between art and life is in a sense the secular version. Curtius' method is determined by a desire (which, as he says of Balzac, "becomes a creative principle") to accept the distinctions and the tensions between the imaginative and the real, between art and life, upon which social no less than artistic constructs depend, while at the same time defining those features of both which resolve the tension and make irrelevant the distinction, and which ultimately result in a merging of artistic and social conventions in an aesthetic *complex oppositorum*, at times approaching that almost mystical Theory of the Unity of the All by which he was himself so fascinated, and which he discussed at some length in his essay on Emerson, and in his essay (and a book, published in 1951) on Balzac. The most concise (and suitably paradoxical) expression of this principle is, for Curtius, that of Baudelaire, when he wrote of the "deux qualités littéraires fondamentales: surnaturalisme et ironie." The former leads to a tradition, suggests Curtius in his essay on Cocteau, which is "naive and irresponsible. . . . It only desires to hold fast images . . . (which) would be homeless did poetry not take them up." But although that tradition may quickly become esoteric, literature is generally held to a more "natural" supernaturalism by an ironic awareness that contributes a culturally defined "perspective" to man's creations. And this perspective, as Ortega y Gasset has pointed out, "is one of the components of reality. Far from distorting reality, it organizes it rather." This insight is raised by Curtius to what is essentially a method, though he is not inclined to call it that. Yet he does insist that

> this perspectivism is indeed the appropriate and convincing expression for the new mental attitude of our time. It is the organizing scheme for the twentieth century form of consciousness. It repre-

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> sents perhaps the sole possibility and the sole instrument by which we and our successors might manage to cope with the multiplicity of vital meanings and cultural values that the intellectual syncretism of the age brings us . . . We have only to gain if we raise this process to the level of consciousness . . . From this point of view much of the intellectual history of the nineteenth century appears in a new light. In Emerson's universalism, in Saint-Beuve's relativism, in Nietzsche's psychology ("Every instinct has its perspective . . .") are revealed to us the seeds of a direction of thought that today has become conscious . . . the positive sign of the modern sense of life.

Sense of life. Art certainly should give us this, but how? It is here that Curtius is most uncompromisingly conservative, and most unapologetically affirmative. Reacting strongly to what he felt were the (however unconscious) attempts of many of his contemporaries to subvert the importance of art and the validity of cultural traditions, he chose his battleground carefully. His strategy was good, though his tactics in some of the skirmishes were often unfortunate: one sometimes feels rather like E. M. Forster, writing of Eliot's *For Lancelot Andrewes,* that "the argument draws no clear line between literary and social tradition, and one has a feeling at moments that the Muses are connected not so much with Apollo as with the oldest county families." But then Curtius is sly, and generous, for he himself gives us that quotation!

"Where is your self to be found?" asks Hofmannsthal. And he answers: "Always in the deepest enchantment that you have suffered." For Curtius, such enchantment was provided, in those years around the turn of the century in which he was most interested, by that "convenient appellation that serves the categorizing needs of literary historians" called Aestheticism. Immediately, Curtius springs into action.

> What is "mere" aesthete supposed to mean? The artist creates life through forms, and that alone is enough to connect him with the fundamental elements of life, that is, with a potency more actual and more enduring than markets or machines.

Aestheticism was "both a renewal of the sense of beauty and a new beauty. . . . From an intellectual (not pedagogical) standpoint, to say that one 'rejects' aestheticism is meaningless." For how can one reject something which "augmented the expressive possibilities of art and the dynamic tensions of life"?

Curtius is not, of course, arguing for a return to an earlier mode. What he is doing is to apply a particular kind of literature *as argument* to that critical function based on conservative values which he

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affirms. Our attention is directed neither to the argument nor to the formula, but to the result, a result which is in the terms of a creative criticism in which the prerogatives of the imaginative and the real, of art and of life, are fused. The method is explained by its results, and may be likened to an "alchemy of the intellect" in which (as Curtius says in his essay on "George, Hofmannsthal, and Calderón") "inherited cultural possessions and artistic forms are melted down, transmuted, and summoned to a new and higher life." This alchemy accomplishes the synthesis of some apparently intractable opposites, through a redefinition of the kind of energy which informs and gives life to each. For example, "natural" poetry and "art" poetry are found (by Friedrich Schlegel, clarified by Curtius) to have a common source—what the eighteenth century called "enthusiasm." "For it is precisely this deep, fervent animation from which all life springs, even that of the imagination, just as every flight of the spirit is carried upward on its own wings."

The "enthusiast," then, or what the Christian community of Corinth called *pneumatikoi,* becomes the true poet and the true critic, possessing "gifts of grace" (or *charismata*) the validity of which were acknowleged by the apostle Paul, and the source of which were said by him to be the holy spirit (1 Corinthians 12). These "creative spirits" were thereby invested with all that Curtius most admired—authority and legitimacy. They were, in one of his favourite phrases, "great affirmers"; and just as for Paul, as for Stephen Dedalus (who is discussed very perceptively by Curtius in his essay on Joyce), "fatherhood has no meaning save as spiritual generation," so for Curtius the authority of a creation has no meaning save as cultural generation. "Self-expression is not creativity."

Curtius' touchstones are crucial: Goethe, for example, who gives us a view of poetry which excludes its interpretation by way of "lived experience," a view of a place "where you gaze clearly upon sweet clarity." And Virgil, whose poetry is circumscribed by the "blessed idleness" which it affirms: "*Otium* (leisure) is one of the key words of Virgil's poetry," just as it was of Wilde's criticism, and of that fundamental "aesthetic sense for which Baudelaire found the poetic formula: *Luxe, calme et volupté.*" The function is defined by its limits: Stefan George, perhaps, calling in *Blätter für die Kunst* (1909), in a rather untypical spirit, for the cultivation of beauty "to the exclusion of everything social and political"; or Quintin Hogg, outlining in a suitably outrageous way *The Case for Conservatism* (1947):

> Conservatives do not believe that political struggle is the most important thing in life. In this they differ from Communists, Socialists, Nazis, Fascists, Social Creditors and most members of the British Labour Party. The simplest among them prefer fox-hunting —the wisest religion.

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For Curtius, the important things in life are embodied in literature, and in the traditions and cultures by which it is sustained, and for which it provides nourishment and continuity. He denies that it is always possible "to understand (an author) and his works by pure genetic derivation," and instead advocates a system of "spiritual affinities" which will be recognizable when transformed by the formulaic rules of the kind of critical apprehension that he prescribes,

> since it is possible to be related without being acquainted, and since the relationship of two things or two people who do not know of one another emerges in the process of their being perceived by the mind of the observer, whereupon they take their place in their full individual historical significance. It is not a matter here of a game involving subjective caprice or delight in random combinations, but of an authentic mode of perception that confers upon its object an increased measure of objective content.

What this critical apprehension involves is a certain kind of recognition, a recognition of the purpose or design, as well as the motifs and the themes, which are embodied in the work and the tradition, and of the extent to which an author and a culture "fulfil the entelechy" by which they are defined. In some cases, as for example with Balzac, the author's work takes on the attributes of an entire tradition, and such an author will implicitly or explicitly demand that the critic recognize that "il ne suffit pas d'être un homme; il faut être un système." Curtius glosses Balzac's comment: "To be a system means: to apprehend one's own creation as a purposefully ordered continuity." And the critic must share, and must elucidate, this apprehension. For the critic's subject is the "topic" which he apprehends, where the topic is treated (as in the first medieval encyclopedia, the *Etymologiae* of Bishop Isidore of Seville) as a "simply admirable achievement" *(mirabile plane genus operis)*. It is the critic's task and his responsibility to identify this achievement properly, and to define the uniqueness of the form in which it has been accomplished. Only then can he rightly proceed, acknowledging that "all intellectual substance which has been given form can become matter for new creation." Such a new creation is the critic's, and its 'point of departure' (in the words of Du Bos, that chronicler of "an Anglo-aesthetic nineteenth century") is

> almost always a sensation, a sensation which depends most of the time on intellectual sensibility, but which is as precise and as powerful as the sensations which come to us through the senses; the intensity of the sensation is such that it communicates itself to the entire soul, and under the abundance of the afflux the emotion bursts forth at once.

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Aware of the possibility of such experiences, Curtius is acutely sensitive to that which prompts his most stirring criticism, "the tension that exists between vitality and culture, a disequilibrium affecting not only the German but the whole European spirit of the age." But it is the strength and genuine glory of the true critic that he is not thereby emasculated, that his authority still remains intact, and his creative power still exercises its legitimate sway. The game continues, for "it is a sign of spiritual poverty not to be prepared to see in defeat one of the aspects that life can assume." And, after all, as Curtius insists with wonderfully paradoxical enthusiasm, it is not the critic's business to save the world, nor even Europe. "Le monde," as André Gide recognized, "sera sauvé par quelques-uns." Perhaps Shelley was right, and Demogorgon should have the final word; like Prometheus, the critic must display "Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,/ (Which) are the seals of that most firm assurance/ Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength," and must "hope till Hope creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates." Curtius' hope was simple, and directed his contemplation of European literature and culture while the legitimate authority which it sought became accomplished.

> Si nunc se nobis ille aureus arbore ramus
> Ostendat nemore in tanto!
>
> If only that golden bough on the tree would
> show itself to us now in so great a grove!

Virgil was a marvellously apt patron, for a critic of rare gifts and compelling authority.

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RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Poetry Chronicle

OUT OF SOME THIRTY VOLUMES which came my way for this Chronicle, I chose to ignore those which I thought worthless or bad, and, after regretfully eliminating several marginal cases, to concentrate on those which I thought were really good. So what do I mean by good? Let me borrow from Auden's foreword to the selection of poems by Joseph Brodsky which is noted later in this review:

> One demands two things of a poem. Firstly, it must be a well-made verbal object that does honor to the language in which it is written. Secondly, it must say something significant about a reality common to us all, but perceived from a unique perspective. What the poet says has never been said before, but, once he has said it, his readers recognize its validity for themselves.

It looks as if the deeply mourned Sage of Christ Church had gone out of his way to phrase as prosaically as he could his version of "what oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed"; one of the most exciting bits of magic that can happen is "a well-made verbal object." Also, Valéry, for example, might have objected unconditionally to the requirement of "something significant about a reality." But I will go along with this definition because it works; any poem which fills Auden's requirements will be some kind of good poem.

Next, consider James Dickey's praise (it is meant as praise) of William Carlos Williams:[1]

> Has any other poet in American history been so *actually* useful, usable, and influential? How many beginning writers took Williams as their model: were encouraged to write because . . . Well, if *that's* poetry, I believe I might be able to write it, too!

Surely a great deal of depressingly bad poetry is thereby accounted for (I am not, of course, talking about Mr. Dickey's own excellent productions); and surely, through relaxation of what ought to be cruelly rigorous standards, not only do beginners from nine to ninety have a lot of perfectly harmless fun, but volumes and volumes of indifferent verse are being published, praised, and promoted. It is difficult, sometimes practically impossible, to review bad poetry. That which is preposterously awful, Stuffed Owl material, can have its

[1] *Poetry*, vol. 103 (1963-4), p. 321.

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absurdities anatomized; but poetry which is merely dim dull flat lank and pointless can only be quoted (at expensive length), not discussed, and may be safely entrusted to the awards committees. On the other hand, the material which came my way does contain a gratifying number of fair to excellent poets, some new, some established, and most of this chronicle will be devoted to the best of them.

One may write a poem by following a mood or a thought through the forms which they cause and help one to construct. One may also simply select a subject: a scene, say, a painting or photograph, an animal, rock, or any other piece of nature, and exploit it for what comes out of it. In his latest book,[2] Daniel Hoffman has used both methods, but conspicuously, and most successfully, the second. The title poem describes at some length a man, watched by a crowd, threatening to jump from a high bridge. The scene may be real or imagined; you may read a meaning into it or take it straight. The language is factual, uncolored, and right. Among more than fifty titles, some of the others are "Stone," "Fire," "Tree," "Raven," "Door," "Window," "North," "South," "East," "West," "Mackerel," "Path." "Egg" gives us a wildly witty Robin Redbreast, with an irreverent nod to Blake. "Rats" details a fiendish method of getting rid of them through a sequence of possessions and murders reminiscent of the tree kings in the grove of Nemi. Out of much strong poetry I could quote, here (to show you what I mean) is the end of "Dogfish":

> The mate hands me the hatchet to hack his head off
>
> —I see that struggle in the mind's slow motion still:
> Dogfish, smallest of sharks, who just was the terror
> That rocketed through the somnambulant schools
>
> Of weakfish fated for his belly or our chowder,
> His head atilt, the underslung jaw of sawblades ripping
> White flesh in the deep green dimness.
>
> A stinking gobbet of squid on my hook was
> His undoing. Wedged in his ravenous throat
> The barbed iron, the invisible cord, relentless.
>
> My arm is unable to stop. I beat the blade
> Where the gills writhe with a life of their own and
> the head
> Flops free. His body as long as my arm jerks to a
> dead stop.

The poems of Edgar Bowers[3] are so carefully and honestly made that it is ungracious to carp at them. And yet, some of the time, I do.

[2] THE CENTER OF ATTENTION, by *Daniel Hoffman*. Random House. $6.00.
[3] LIVING TOGETHER, by *Edgar Bowers*. Godine. $7.95.

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Consider the first two stanzas of "Two Poems on the Catholic Bavarians":

> The fierce and brooding holocaust of faith
> This people conquered, which no edict could,
> And wove its spirit stiff and rich like cloth
> That many years ago was soaked in blood.
>
> Their minds are active only in their hands
> To check and take the labor of the hills,
> To furnish nature its precise demands
> And bear its harshness as it seems God wills.

I for one have absolutely no objection to iambic quatrains. Think of Hart Crane. Of John Crowe Ransom. But these correct lines somehow do not move. Or consider all of "Chorus for the Untenured Personnel" (and I do like the title and the thought):

> If we are on probation, what's our crime?
> Original sin, mysterious want of grace,
> The apple that we ate in a happier time
> Of learning, friendship, courtesy, and wit—
> Our innocence! For see, the gorgon's face,
> The discipline of hatred, our true text.
> We read, in darkness visible, the X.

But what a mouthful of abstractions, and oh that saving apple, the only solid thing to bite on! So again, in five lines of "From William Tyndale to John Frith," we find "sweet threats," "malicious love," "dangerous fear of violence," "illusion's goodness," "worldly innocence," "just persuasion's old hypocrisy." Is it too carnal of us if we remain unmoved by these airy oxymorons? But if not moved, still admiring, since the intelligence and its expression are there.

John Hollander in a small chapbook[4] presents a sequence of fifteen poems identically formed as five tercets each. Select at random number 7:

> Down the shaded street, toward an avenue
> Of light, a gleaming picture receded:
> The sudden lady, tall, fair and distant
>
> Glided slowly, and her beautiful leg
> Sole but unlonely, swung walking along
> Between the companionable crutches,

[4] THE HEAD OF THE BED, by *John Hollander*. Godine. $2.50.

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Flesh hand in hand with sticks. He followed them
And waited in a sunny place, and when
She halted, there were woods. Turning her head,

She smiled a bad smile, framed by a shadow
Flung from a tower somewhere. He dared not move
Toward her one leg, toward her covered places

Lest he be lost at once, staring at where
Lay, bared in the hardened moonlight, a stump
Pearly and smooth, a tuft of forest grass.

Note the metrical mastery. Freedom for emphasis in reading English verse allows the reader some play, but I discern here only four lines which are in strictly regular iambics; and yet the latent metre steers the verse quite surely through its variations, through which it half-communicates a series of mythlike dreams. Sources and parallels, Kabbalistic or other (among the other are Trumbull Stickney, Conrad Aiken, Rossetti, Dante, and Tennyson) are set forth with a certain bland erudition by Harold Bloom in a commentary which contributes little elucidation but some richness of its own as it lulls us into a kind of pleased incomprehension. Indeed, sometimes the words of the poems do seem to have taken over control from their master, victim of his own verbal magic. A *little* at least of that has to happen in the best poetry.

These Godine Chapbooks are small (thirty-two pages gross) and Mary Baron's[5] small quiet poems do not usually come close to filling the page. One poet from my allotment, who is not worth reviewing, whom it is therefore unfair to name, sought to generate excitement by swilling abundance, by hysterical line distribution, and a generous use of capital letters. By contrast, Mary Baron is a relief, but her temperate blank verse can run a little thin. Small surprises in these studies of commonplace happenings (and there is nothing wrong with that) come welcome, as in "Love Letter":

It snows now even when the sun is out.
The day your letter came, I stayed inside—
All day. My hair is growing long. The dog
Has had her puppies; we gave them away.
Mondays I teach. Every goddamn time
I pass the place I think of you. My dear,
What can I say to you, at such a distance?

It is the beautifully placed "goddamn" that makes the poem come alive. Its pace as such had been undistinguished. With her, as with Bowers and Hollander, it is very much a question of how to handle

[5] LETTERS FOR THE NEW ENGLAND DEAD, by *Mary Baron*. Godine. $2.50.

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iambics imaginatively. Bowers' remind me of Winters, Hollander's of Stevens, Baron's of Frost. Of these three, *whatever* their other merits, Stevens had incomparably the best ear. But with a more staggered line, Mary Baron can turn out a lovely little poem like "Ninth Month," which ends:

> Small one, I know your helplessness
> And haste. Wanting poems, I turn in this dark
> Winter, watching for light, waiting for words
> And you.
>
> I mumbled curses, giving birth,
> Pushing the child to come, wanting her out
> Ready or not. Love, like the poem, comes later.

The latest by X. J. Kennedy[6] is, like those of Hollander and Baron, confined to the chapbook limits of the Godine series, but he is in any case a master poet who doles them out all too sparingly. And not all these poems are good; that goes for a couple of rather dirty ones, including "Onan's Soliloquy." I did think I knew about Onan (like Alexander Woollcott's untidy canary) but I can't make head nor tail *(sic)* out of this one. But the title poem has some engaging imitations of Emily, as for instance "I'm loath to tolerate a sky/ That will not stand for storm." There is an excellent study called "Mining Town" where "Sheds for machines that lower tons of men/ Clasp dirt for dear life." And here, though it's really too long to quote, is all of "Schizophrenic Girl":

> Having crept out this far,
> So close your breath casts moisture on the pane,
> Your eyes blank lenses opening part way
> To the dead moonmoth fixed on pins of rain,
> Why hover
> A swimmer not quite surfaced, inches down
> Fluttering water, making up her mind
> To breathe, or drown?
>
> All autumn, earth locked deeper in her slant
> Back from the level sunlight, you, you wouldn't quit
> That strait-backed chair we'd dress you in, you'd sit,
> Petrified fire, casting a glare,
> Refuse to swallow, to concede
> There were such things as spoons. And so we'd feed
> You through a vein
> Smashed into like a lake we'd icefish in—
> Can no one goad
> You forth into the unsteady hearthlight of the sane?

[6] EMILY DICKINSON IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, by *X. J. Kennedy*. Godine. $2.50.

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Already, yawning child
At a dull drawn-out adult affair,
You whimper for permission to retire
To your room where black
T-squared shadows lie, vacuity
A sheet drawn halfway back.

If you'd just cry. Involved
Around some fixed point we can't see, you whirl
In a perpetual free-fall.
Turn back. We cannot stand
To see transformed to stone what had been hand,
What had been mind smoothed to a bright steel ball.

It isn't just the images, it's the rhetoric of the whole thing.

Alan Dugan's poems[7] talk to or at or about himself. There is seldom a we or a you, seldom an address to another person, though he does end a poem on The Statue of Liberty by apostrophizing Liberty's poet: "They don't take her, Emma Lazarus, they don't/ take Liberty, although you said she says she gives." (As for Miss Liberty, this poem should be compared with May Swenson's "To the Statue." Both are brilliant. Dugan's is the more moral, but while his "green/ pistachio ice cream cone" for the torch is very good, I like May Swenson's "asparagus tip" even better.) Dugan's insistent first-person is without self-importance or self-pity. He is not complaining so much as chewing out himself and his world; any griefs he's got are not outpoured at length, never at length, but ground out in well-phrased lines. His terrors are real and natural:

Why
don't I go outside and sleep
on the ground. It is because
I'm scared of the open night
and stars looking down at me
as God's eyes, full of questions.

That, at least, is not nightmare, which mainly we are spared, though there may be memory of much confusion:

There are effects
of mine all over. What
I did I'll never know
but should retrieve
my acts by their
debris, right? There are:
clothes on the stairs,
a broken window, trash

[7] POEMS 4, by *Alan Dugan*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $6.50.

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cans in the flower-bed,
a woman singing "Hi
honey," and what else?
I must have left
by the broken window or
I broke it with her head
and then came back.

A confirmed angel-wrestler, Dugan is beset by the facts of life, such as the need to make money and the unpleasant nature of the job that makes it, or the simple problem of how much to drink, or not to drink:

Two shots down and I'm exalted,
so I have the choice: do I give out
the passion of the day to whiskey, arts and crafts,
and lose tomorrow's to the shakes and nausea,
or do I be a joiner with the bourgeoisie
and cool it, feed, do labor, and make sleep?

Though sometimes too carefully tough, Dugan is never flat, nor dull.

Barbara L. Greenberg in her first book[8] shows a considerable range between lucid elegance and nightmare. I do not like her best when she is most crazy, as in the beginning of "I Was Looking":

through a crevice at the hunger children
when my hands
dropped from my wrists.

She is better when she brings off a sound sestina, or sharp variations on the villanelle as in "227–2272" or the extremely persuasive "Lines from a Caribbean Beach." "Survival" is beautifully turned with a nuance of rhymes and half-rhymes. "Birdfeeding," which begins with "Big stupid bird" well shows exasperation with a bird (or anybody else?) who presumes on casual kindness. But the nightmare poems and the crazy poems predominate, and they are best when the crazy sequence rolls itself out in tempered phrases, as in "The Bedroom," part 2 of "Just after the Widow's Death":

What dime store stylist has . . . ? I mean
the flapping ruffles, the embarrassments of dust,
the goldfish bubbling in their . . . No,
not plaster spaniels, not

the hot pink palsy of her . . . Oh, but yes,
it is. Her pink, her bed, her flowered wall,
her Saint Cecilia framed in tin, her box

[8] THE SPOILS OF AUGUST, by *Barbara L. Greenberg*. Wesleyan. $6.00.

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of, in their fluted nests, soft center chocolates
each bitten into . . .

There is no message
scotch-taped to the mirror, reading
"Friends, remember . . ."

What is is twisted on the bed:
A wash-gray sleepy doll, its button eyes
torn-off, its once-enamelled mouth
a crusty streak, an insolent cry of
want, I want, I want.

And passages as good as that, or nearly, can pop out from almost anywhere in these pages.

In another first book,[9] Marilyn Hacker can, and frequently does, compose sonnets, villanelles, and sestinas with proficiency and with great versatility. As is always the case with such a poet, her unconstrained free forms are superior. The blurb, by Richard Howard, therefore more than a blurb, describes her as having "intensity of craftsmanship" (yes!), also as being "witty, desperate." Witty, for sure. Desperate? So too Bloom described Hollander as giving us "a style fit for our despair." Despair is desperately fashionable (that should be a warning) and I suppose we all do have our private despairs, but must we keep checking them to make sure they are desperate enough? I suspect Marilyn Hacker of sometimes playing up to this theme with her recurrent nightmare of a third presence, generally or mostly male, who keeps pushing her or somebody out of some lover's bed: as in "Alba: September"

and woke because your lover, holding you
diagonally on the bed, was shoving me
between the mattress and the wall, determinedly
asleep. Clever Jean-Paul imagined hell
unloving threesies in a cheap hotel.
No room in that bed.

And the theme haunts a long sequence called "The Navigators." But there is another mood, as in "The Art of the Novel" . . . "I always/ gossip in poems, mostly about myself". "She Bitches about Boys" is, I think, a characteristic poem:

To live on charm, one must be courteous.
To live on others' love, one must be lovable.
Some get away with murder being beautiful.

[9] **PRESENTATION PIECE**, by *Marilyn Hacker*. Viking. $2.95.

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Girls love a sick child or a healthy animal.
A man who's both itches them like an incubus,
but I, for one, have had a bellyful

of giving reassurances and obvious
advice with scrambled eggs and cereal;
then bad debts, broken dates, and lecherous

onanistic dreams of estival
nights when some high-strung, well-hung, penurious
boy, not knowing what he'd get, could be more generous.

Some satisfaction in dissatisfaction here, I think. A rather long poem dedicated to Janis Joplin is the most moving piece in the book, but there are many admirable poems. We hear, for instance, the cool burnished phrases of Nimue propositioning Merlin within the frame of a sestina. This is an impressive new talent.

Judith Minty[10] is another newcomer. I find her poetry clear, intensely personal, often understated. Most of her poems grow better and better with several readings, whereas the best ones by Greenberg and Hacker hit me hard at first sight. Both qualities make good poetry. Here, for instance, is the end of "Ludington State Park Revisited":

The wishing well still stands. Let us hurry, for the water
is cool and you can run it on your wrists. But who is
Betty loves Joe 1968 and what are these obscenities?

And what is this new species cluttering the trail?—smoking, shouting, dropping their droppings on top of the animal spoor. You need not hold your breath, child, even loosely.

The lumberjacks in flannel jackets are dead, and I'm glad, for the winter whirring of snowmobiles has swallowed their studious, steady saw strokes.

And the natural, supernatural amphitheater now is trampled to its greatest tragedy. Let us go home, daughter. We shall ask your grandfather (my father) to make us another memory.

These long periods of not-quite-prose do, as Auden and Pope requested, express, with an inevitability of phrase, something we have all felt but never said in quite this way. They typify also her feel for a certain locality, the northern part of Lake Michigan. Her at-

[10] LAKE SONGS AND OTHER FEARS, by *Judith Minty*. University of Pittsburgh. $2.50.

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tempts to convey the "American Indian heritage" (jacket) seem less successful. We even get "you who speaks/with forked tongue" and I don't think that's meant to be funny. But "Psalm of David" is a striking rendition of a woman lonely and restless in church while the assurances of the psalm counterpoint and contradict her mood. Another contrapuntal effect is worked out in the last poem, "Making Music." The daughter driving long roads at night remembers her mother "in front of the old white mangle," neither one exactly making music, both, however, like organists, working pedals and absorbed in the rhythms that bind present to remembered tasks and scenes.

Calvin Forbes, once again in a first book[11] offers, first of all, strikingly phrased negro blues: "I left / Worries south for another / Mule"; "Your fingers are negroes / They do all the work for your fat arms"; "Some children belong / In the yard, others wander in the wilds. / But whose father / Will lift me and help me run this race?" Unlike Dugan, he reaches out to others. Internal evidence tends to indicate that Dugan is happily married, but his wife in the poems appears only as "my wife." But Forbes appeals to father mother family beloveds, to humanity in general; not as one who is soulful or wistful, but with style and wit. "My Marie" is in fact constructed about socks with holes in them:

> Ah, failure of belief. My poor socks
> Have outgrown their feet! They will
> Have to be taken off like the skin
> Of a bear that's needed for a rug.

Observe the structure of "The Middle Life":

> The brown shingles flap
> Like Mister Sam's worn-out drawers.
> The down man below me
> Regrooves his voice to sing
>
> A blues; the rain damns me in.
> Mother moves without her
> Shoes; children listen to themselves
> During our Sunday quiet time.
>
> The girl above dances
> And her steps pry open the ceiling crack
> That grins like a crocodile.
> I'm caught in the middle
>
> Of this sandwich, waiting.
> Our Sunday house shines; there's no
> Place to hide; the faster I pray

[11] BLUE MONDAY, by *Calvin Forbes*. Wesleyan. $6.00.

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The slower I go. I'm breath-

Less; the air is like a noose.
It's my middle life, the uncool time
Between sin and salvation.
The rain damns me in.

There are several kinds of sandwich here, but they go together. As with any good poet, one would like to quote more at length, but the special talent of Forbes is done better justice than for most through specimens of his images and tropes. "My poems are full of carefully wrought phrases," he claims, while complaining of being patronized by an audience that seems to be white, or mainly so. The phrases are better than just carefully wrought: witness "Acres/ Of wheat bow like the heads/Of slaves"; "My father mumbled himself into the scenery"; "You can't follow in your father's/ Footsteps because he never went anywhere/ And you talk about tomorrow as if you cared"; "My best is full of holes." And more, and more.

Ruth Fainlight is apparently well known in Britain, and this[12] is her third book of verse. Her work is uneven, but rewarding. Instance: a poem simply called "Poem":

First it's a week, then a month, then a year.
I can tell myself there's nothing to fear—
That even a year is as nothing compared
To the length of a life. But empty time
Augments, has its own demands and rights.
The fear itself becomes my life unless
I leave some mark to prove I was here
Except those scabs I've worried off
The wounds I won't allow to heal—but flaunt,
Preserve, admire, and call it art.

It's the last three lines that rescue the wobbly metre and uncertain thought of the poem's beginning. The last three lines are worth a whole poem. A much better unity is "Lilith," the first and only good poem about women's lib I have encountered so far. Too long to quote, it's a beauty all the way. Lilith, created with Adam, took equality for granted, and "Adam and God were embarrassed." She was replaced by "Eve, the chattel," and Lilith was banished. And so

Good wives make amulets
Against her, to protect themselves.
Lilith is jealous.

Lean, dry, consciously tough; these are obvious, certainly not inspired, characaterizations of the poems of H. L. Van Brunt,[13] which

[12] THE REGION'S VIOLENCE, by *Ruth Fainlight*. Hutchinson, £1.60.
[13] INDIAN TERRITORY, by *H. L. Van Brunt*. The Smith-Horizon. $3.00.

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I mostly admire; in spite of myself, since they, less than all the foregoing, conform to my obsessions about what modern poetry ought not to be. I even like him, though he no more demands to be liked than Dugan does. He has something to write about: fragments of an autobiography, a broken childhood, a beloved sister untimely dead:

> my sister died
> coughing & laughing & smoking lucky strikes
> in a hospital on the prairie.

He has a territory and a landscape; then he leaves it for foreign parts, and he's still good. At times; at times he's pretty bad. Take, from "Memoirs":

> The trees in deserted Paris
> On the Boulevard St. Germain
> Stand recessed like huge vaginas
> Sucking the August air.

For vulgarity and sheer bad drawing combined, that sets some kind of record, and parts of the same poem are classical documentation of the Awful American Abroad. Yet this same poem can end with:

> Paris, I could write you out memoirs.
> We no longer live together.
> And when we try we can't quite ever
> Separate the sweet from bitter.
>
> So let us look through the *Bois de Boulogne,*
> *L'Orangerie,* and the *Cimetière*
> For two who simply loved one another.
> They are there.

That I find unpretentiously touching. And so is the ending to "Poem for the People of Youghal":

> I think of men whose lives sound like the wind
> whipping along the cliffs,
> whose heads
> sink as low in stout as the hills in winter fog,
> whose words tumble out of their mouths like birds—
> cursing the bays and skies,
> daydreaming of New York,
> Cousin Liam in Chicago,
> two hundred dollars a week.

The Pomegranate Press[14] is issuing a series of illustrated broad-

[14] The Pomegranate Press. Prices from $6.00 up.

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sides, each presenting an original poem by an American poet: a beautiful if expensive way to buy poetry. The selection which came to me consisted of poems by Robert Bly, Robert Creeley, Richard Eberhart, Archibald MacLeish, Kenneth Rexroth, and Mark Van Doren. I particularly liked those by Eberhart and MacLeish; but all looked exceedingly handsome on the page.

Translations abound nowadays, and they are difficult to criticize as literature. I chose only a few from a sizeable list. A selection of Morgenstern's poems[15] comes in a translation by Max Knight, with illustrations by H. A. Rey, and with German texts provided. Morgenstern may be too whimsical for some; I find myself more charmed than transported by the sensitive Palmstroem who could not bear to blow his nose on a pretty handkerchief, the pike who with his family was converted to vegetarianism by Saint Anthony only to find the stuff passed right on through and polluted the pond, or the carthorse who rang the upstairs doorbell of Professor Stein and his family. Most of the time the German fancies came through quite neatly, but the translation is disfigured by some appalling inversions, such as

> It turns around then calmly and
> walks down again the staircase.

Or there is "To set up an experiment/ some money I on needles spent" or "Palmstroem stands beside a pond/ where a scarlet handkerchief he wide unfolds." It is a pity that these little monsters were allowed to stand, since they are entirely unnecessary and cannot be blamed on the German, and since Knight can do much better. This, for instance, is what happens when you are exposed to the wrath of the Southeast Asian porcupine (*Hystrix grotei Kurtz*):

> From top to bottom thereupon
> you're pinned against a tree,
> a holy Saint Sebastian,
> and doubting what you see.
>
> But hystrix walks away, he's through,
> his soul and body spent.
> He's hiding in the jungle to
> repent.

The illustrations are absolutely adequate.

With trepidation appropriate to one meddling with an entirely unknown language, I turn from German to two volumes translated from the Russian: one, an anthology of poems from the Under-

[15] THE DAYNIGHT LAMP AND OTHER POEMS, by *Christian Morgenstern*, translated by *Max Knight*, with lithographs by *H. A. Rey*. University of California. $5.95.

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ground;[16] the other, a selection of Joseph Brodsky's poetry.[17] So first, the Underground. Twenty-six named poets are represented, and there are three anonymous pieces. The poems have bilingual facing texts. The introduction and notes are copious, temperate, and informative. Among the poets, Voznesensky (represented by one bitter poem) and several others have had some "official" publication, but mostly this is truly underground production, the work of poets under pressure and in constant danger, typed poems, not printed, and smuggled out to the West. And so criticism is particularly difficult. *"Their voices cry out to be heard."* This is on the jacket, but it is obvious fact and can not be escaped nor ignored. If a poet living in safety and comfort in America were to make such a claim, we should instruct him to see to it, as best he might, that his voice is transmitting poems worth listening to. But in this case the very fact that they are written at all would command some respect and attention even if the production were mediocre. It seldom is. The translators seem to have done their work well; the volume is worth rereading for its own sake. The subjects for verse are by no means confined to the abuses restrictions deathmarches exiles and imprisonments of the present, though these do make up a great deal of the matter. Among the most effective are those by Vladimir Batshev and Yevgeny Kushev on the Decembrist Uprising some of whose leaders were hanged in 1826. Here is part of Kushev's sequence:

Who can believe it now,
five noblemen gone down,
good jobs and lovely wives,
for the riffraff of the town,
the peasants and the tramps?
Whom did they think to bless?
What for? I do not know.
The guns freeze, motionless.
And there in the biting wind
Commander Sukin came
and raised a white cloth up.
"Poet? His fate's the same;
his head is also draped
with the same sack." Six o'clock
while over the populace
the bells of morning sound,
and Sukin, in charade,
leads his precise parade.

[16] POETRY FROM THE RUSSIAN UNDERGROUND, translated and edited by *Joseph Langland, Tamas Aczel, Laszlo Tikos.* Harper & Row. $8.95.

[17] SELECTED POEMS, by *Joseph Brodsky,* translated with Introduction by *George Kline;* with Foreword by *W. H. Auden.* Harper & Row. $5.95.

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Strangely reminiscent of Yeats, these poems crystallize the present through a view of the past.

Joseph Brodsky has emerged from the Underground. Disapproved of by the government, not permitted to publish in Russia, sentenced to five years of hard labor (not served in full; but still . . .), then "invited to leave Russia," he has presumably been a free man since 1972. Despite the background, Brodsky's poems are not really revolutionary; they are in the main non-political, though such a fine Byzantine sequence as "Post Aetatem Nostram" shows, to put it mildly, lack of love and respect for established power. He has also been attracted by Western poetry, particularly British and American, by Greek classicism, and by Christianity. Along with all this goes a good standard Russian "anguish unaccountable" which does not even need a detested authority to help it to ferment in the Russian soul. It is hard for me to tell just how absolute a master Brodsky is. There is a vagueness at times. There are lines which are aimed at epigrammatic point which simply go flying past my head, like "If you're not recalled by stone,/puffball drift will make you known." What does that mean? I never met a drifting puffball, and have no idea of what they can do. But there is no mistaking the nobility of the "Elegy for John Donne," nor the satiric virtuosity of "Two Hours in an Empty Tank," in both of which rather long poems George Kline shows at his versatile best as a translator.

It was in his preface for this same Brodsky that Auden spoke of the poem, as we desire it, as a "well-made verbal object"; with meaning too, you remember, but let me dwell on the part about "well-made." Looking back over the present material, I find a gratifying number of poets whose work meets such a test; a test which allayed, though it could not remove, the necessary agony of selection, for it was the better makers who mostly got in. It is an important fact that a couple of poets, as noted above, expertly made *living* poems out of such classical forms as sestina, sonnet and villanelle. On the other hand, one who didn't quite make it presented two poems in, if you please, Spenserian stanzas, technically correct too, but without phrases striking enough to redeem the utter incoherence of the content. Certainly not all good poems are formal, and some bad poems are. Not all these poets use rhyme at all, and most use it sparingly. The test seems to be, more precisely, the poet's ability to handle the iambic line (our metre) with the skill that permits him to take liberties with it—or even to ignore it. Technical proficiency, so often regarded by poets with indifference, by critics with sheer terror, cannot do it all, but it counts. If anyone ever told you otherwise, forget it.

One final word. I firmly believe that the poems of Kennedy, Dugan, Hacker, and Van Brunt would be improved in places by a small amount of self-censorship. Maybe some day some poet will be able to use the four-letter words and their associates artistically. It hasn't been done yet. Out harrow and alas. Nobody will ever ask me to write another review.

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

Levertov

WHAT STRUCK ME FIRST ON READING *The Poet in the World,* which is a collection of Denise Levertov's prose writings about art, politics, and life in general,—what struck me first, and what still strikes me in my reconsideration of the book as I prepare to write this review, though now in a stronger, richer way, is the force of the author's good sense and practical wisdom.[1] To many readers this may seem surprising. Levertov's base, both philosophical and temperamental, is in Neoplatonism, as I think is well known; certainly it has been more than evident in her poetry for twenty years. But unlike many writers who share this broad neoplatonic provenance, she never, or hardly ever, steps outside her role as a working poet aware of the practical and moral relationships between herself and her poetic materials: her experience, her life, her humanity. She keeps her mind on the reality of imaginative process. She rarely veers into mystical utterance for its own sake.

Recently I was reading Gilbert Sorrentino's *Splendide-Hôtel.*[2] It is a discussion, in the form of an extended personal essay on motifs from Rimbaud and Williams, of the role of the poet in history and civilization. Sorrentino is a fine writer. His book is thoughtful, lucid, wide-ranging, witty, in many ways a work of originality and imagination; I read it with pleasure. But I was aware all the time that his view of the poet—namely, as a person apart, somehow special and superior, exempt from practicality in his vocation, and better qualified than others to deal with the real world (in effect by creating his own super- or anti-reality)—is both antiquated and dangerous. It was dangerous when it was not antiquated, a century ago when it was the esthetic underground of the Victorian era, and it is equally dangerous, if not more, today. Many times, perhaps too many, I have argued this danger in the past, so I have no wish to revive the discussion here. And happily I need not, for Levertov has furnished the perfect answer to Sorrentino, and to a large extent from his own ground of feeling and ideas; I mean her essay entitled "The Poet in the World," the centerpiece of her book. It should be read by every poet in the country—in the world! Written from the working poet's point of

[1] THE POET IN THE WORLD, by *Denise Levertov.* New Directions. Cloth, $9.50; paper, $2.45.

[2] SPLENDIDE-HÔTEL, by *Gilbert Sorrentino.* New Directions. Cloth (limited signed edition produced by Roderick Stinehour), $20.00; paper, $3.25.

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view, out of Levertov's own active experience in the recent period of collaboration between poetry and politics, it has the immediacy and efficacy that my own more scholastic arguments, not to say tirades, doubtless lack.

Has Levertov solved the paradox of the poet as a specialist of sensibility in the practical human world? Not entirely. Her book contains many statements, and her poems many more, in which Sorrentino's view is at least implicit, and I suspect she could read *Splendide-Hôtel,* much of it anyway, without my degree of discomfort. Often she invokes The Poet in a role essentially vatic or ideally prophetic. Her affinity with Neoplatonism, from Plotinus to Swedenborg to Hopkins—a devious thread—is clear. My own base, which is not, whatever else it may be, Neoplatonism, makes me shy away from such statements. But always in her prose, and often in her poetry, there is this saving complementary strain, awareness of the poet as a craftsman engaged in a psychologically reasonable endeavor; ultimately her affinity is with makers more than seers, with Wordsworth and Rilke, Williams and Pound. The title of one of her essays gives it in a nutshell: "Line-Breaks, Stanza-Spaces, and the Inner Voice." Moreover, in her basic humaneness Levertov often realizes, reaches out to, and celebrates the poet in Everyman, at least *in posse,* thus incorporating a necessary disclaiming proviso among her attitudes. She does it best, I think, in the essay, cited above, that deals with sensibility as a moral and political instrument. The paradox remains, of course. It cannot be glossed over. Readers who are philosophically minded will be worried by it; some will be offended. But the point is that Levertov does not . . . well, I was going to say that she does not recognize it, but of course she does. Yet I think she does not *feel* it. She is not stopped by it, not boggled. She works through and beyond it, in her writing and in what we know of her life, conscious only of the wholeness of her vision. And she succeeds. She is practical.

This is the heart of the matter, I think. At any rate it is what I am interested in now: not the larger verities but her own work and the way her theoretical writing applies to her own work, particularly to her recent poetry. Undoubtedly her best known statement about poetry is the brief discussion of "organic form" that was originally published in *Poetry* in 1965, then reprinted a couple of times elsewhere before its appearance in her new book. It is a clear enough, and in some respects a conventional enough, statement; one hesitates to reduce it further than Levertov herself has already reduced it. But in essence it asserts that forms exist in reality as natural, or possibly more than natural, immanences, and that the poet perceives or intuits these forms through acts of meditation, which issue, once the perception has acquired a certain intensity, in the creation of verbal analogies; that is, poems. This is not simply the pathetic fallacy at work in a new way, because the analogy between poem and object is not super-

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ficial; there may be no resemblance whatever in exterior structures, textures, and styles. The resemblance is indwelling. Levertov refers to Hopkins and his invention of the word "inscape" to denote intrinsic, as distinct from apparent, form, and she extends this denotation to apply not only to objects and events but to all phenomena, including even the poet's thoughts, feelings, and dreams. She emphasizes the importance of the quality of meditation, speaking of it in basically religious language. Meditation is the genuine but selfless concentration of attention upon phenomena, the giving of oneself to phenomena, from which proceeds the recognition of inner form; it is, to use another of Hopkins' inventions, the disciplined or ascetic submission to "instress." And I must point out also, with equal emphasis, that although at times Levertov speaks of the poet as no more than an instrument of a larger "poetic power," and although more than once she implies that the poem as a verbal analogy may occur in part spontaneously in a sensibility which is thoroughly attuned to its object through a sufficient act of meditation, nevertheless she insists as well on the element of craft in the poetic process, the part played by verbal experiment and revision in bringing the poem into proper analogy to its phenomenal paradigm. The poem is a *made* object.

I don't say there aren't questions—risks, qualifications, paradoxes by the bucketful—and of course the entire complex is, as I have said, conventional, having appeared and reappeared at many times and in many places; yet Levertov's reformulation is very evidently her own, a personal vision, personal and practical; that is, *it comes from her practice*. One can't miss, either in her prose observations or in her poems, the way her understanding of what she is doing is instinctual at base, ingrained in her whole artistic personality.[3] Look at her poems up to about 1968. They are what we call "lyric poems," mostly rather short; they fall into conventional categories: nature poems, erotic poems, poems on cultural and esthetic themes, and so on. Their style is remarkably consistent from first to last, changing only to improve, within its own limits, in matters of expressive flexibility, subtlety of cadence, integration of sonal and syntactic structures, and the like.

[3] But this does not mean there were no antecedents. Who can disentangle the sources of instinct? I believe Levertov has mentioned somewhere an early admiration for Herbert Read, though his name does not appear in her book: Read, the poet and critic who stood so steadfastly against the Cambridge-dominated school of "objective method" in criticism and philosophy between the two wars. See his *Poetry and Experience*, 1967, esp. Ch. 3, "The Style of Criticism," where he quotes Goethe: "Whereas *simple imitation* flourishes under tranquil and satisfying conditions of existence, and whereas *mannerism* calls for a light touch and a fresh individuality, that which I call *style* rests on the deepest foundations of cognition, on the inner essence of things, in so far as this is given us to comprehend in visible and tangible forms." And notice how the meanings of "style" and "form" have been almost exactly reversed from their former meanings by the Black Mountain writers of the past twenty years, particularly Robert Duncan, whose idiosyncratic usage has influenced many others, including Levertov.

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But if the style is consistent the form is various, the *inner* form. From poem to poem each form is its own, each is the product of its own substance; not only that, each is the *inevitable* product—we sense it though we cannot demonstrate it—of its own substance. (She quotes Louis Sullivan approvingly: "Form follows function.") It has been customary to speak of the musicality of Levertov's poetry, and I have done so myself. But I think this is the wrong term. I doubt that she has been aware of music, e.g., as Pound was aware of it. But she has been deeply aware of formal consonance, of the harmony of inner form and vision; and certainly this, rather than the facility of artifice some critics have ascribed to her, is what lies at the root of her "musical" language.

Now we come to her recent work, particularly the long poem entitled "Staying Alive" (first published incompletely in her book *Relearning the Alphabet,* 1970, later in its completed state in *To Stay Alive,* 1971). It has been praised by some critics, but also dispraised by some—by a good many, in fact. I quote from the sheaf of reviews I have been at pains to collect. "Unfortunately the poems of *To Stay Alive* fail to connect. . . . Self-righteousness and sloganeering impair the language . . .; lofty moral injunctions . . . take the place of a larger vision . . .," etc. ". . . a morale builder, [not] art. . . . hardly the stuff of enduring poetry," etc. ". . . . discouraging to find Denise Levertov's poetry in this volume less fresh and less interesting than before and without a sense of new direction[!]," etc. ". . . disappointing . . . exhaustion from too much struggle," etc. ". . . depressing experience . . . self-indulgent spillings-out," etc. ". . . poetic journalese . . . bad prose," etc. And a good deal more of the same.

But none of the critics has taken the trouble to define the poem in the poet's terms. It is, first, a sequence about the poet's life as a political activist from 1966 to 1970; second, an exploration of the sense and temper of those years generally; third, an attempt to locate and express the poet's own complex feelings, particularly with regard to questions of artistic responsibility; and fourth—and most important—a creation of poetic analogues to the inner form, the *inscape,* of that momentous "historical present." Remember the elements of poetic process as Levertov conceives them—perception, meditation, making—and then apply them to the *substance* of this long poem, those enormously intricate social, historical, esthetic, and moral *gestalten.* A whole nation, even the world, is involved here. No wonder the poem is multiform. It contains, what so annoys the critics, highly lyric passages next to passages of prose—letters and documents. But is it, after *Paterson,* necessary to defend this? The fact is, I think Levertov has used her prose bits better than Williams did, more prudently and economically; she has learned from *Paterson.* And aside from that, if one grants the need, in a long poem, for modulations of intensity, as everyone must and does, then why not grant the further modulation from verse into

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prose? It is perfectly feasible. Much of "Staying Alive" is what I call low-keyed lyric invocation of narrative; not narrative verse as such, not "thus spake mighty Agamemnon" or "the boy stood on the burning deck"; but instead—

> Brown gas-fog, white
> beneath the street lamps.
> Cut off on three sides, all space filled
> with our bodies.
> Bodies that stumble
> in brown airlessness, whitened
> in light, a mildew glare,
> that stumble
> hand in hand, blinded, retching.
> Wanting it, wanting
> to be here, the body believing it's
> dying in its nausea, my head
> clear in its despair, a kind of joy,
> knowing this is by no means death,
> is trivial, an incident, a
> fragile instant . . .

Brilliance is not wanted here, nor musicality (the superficial kind), but rather a strong supple verse, active and lucid; and this is exactly what we have. It changes; heightens and descends; turns soft or hard as the evolving analogy demands; it does the job. I repeat, the poem must be read whole. And readers who do this, as they easily can in one sitting, will see, I believe, or hear, precisely the consonance I spoke of in connection with Levertov's shorter lyrics, but now greatly enlarged and more varied: a just analogue for a complex phenomenon, unified in its whole effect, its vision, and its inner, "organic" form.

I don't say the poem succeeds in every line. That would have been a miracle. Sometimes the poet's perception or meditation apparently flagged; she tried to make up for it with acts of simple artistic will (as when she writes about her English friends whose lives "are not impaled on the spears of the cult of youth"). But such lapses are few. They do not disturb the unity of the poem.

As for the recurrent accusation of self-indulgence, who except the self can perceive, meditate, and create? Would the poem have been different if the poet had remained "anonymous" and "omniscient"? No, except for a possible loss of authenticity. Was De Tocqueville self-indulgent? Was Mrs. Trollope? Montaigne wrote: "I owe a complete portrait of myself to the public. The wisdom of my lesson is wholly in truth, in freedom, in reality"; and reality in this poem is in part the exemplary, very exemplary, responses of the poet to the perplexities of a time of rapid social disintegration. Clearly Montaigne

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was right for himself in his more moderate circumstances, and I think Levertov is equally right in the extremity of her (and our) circumstances. I also think that "Staying Alive" is one of the best products of the recent period of politically oriented vision among American poets.

Denise Levertov and I are good friends. Writing "Levertov" repeatedly where I would normally write "Denise" has seemed peculiar to me, even painful in a way. But I have done it and have reserved this acknowledgment until the end because I believe our friendship, which I suppose is rather well known, makes no difference and should make no difference to what I have written here. For that matter I am named in the preface of *To Stay Alive,* and I not only was shown the manuscript of *The Poet in the World* at an early stage of assemblage, I was later hired by its publisher to perform necessary copyediting before it was sent to the printer. So my bias is clear. If my view of Denise's work were antipathetic, obviously in the circumstances I would choose to say nothing about it. But the fact that my view is, on the contrary, sympathetic does not seem to me to detract from its usefulness. I have omitted many things about *The Poet in the World* that would have been said in the customary review. It is, for instance, a miscellaneous volume, springing from many miscellaneous occasions, and its tone ranges from spritely to gracious to, occasionally, pedantic. It contains a number of pieces about the poet's work as a teacher; it contains her beautiful impromptu obituary for William Carlos Williams, as well as reviews and appreciations of other writers. But chiefly the book is about poetry, its mystery and its craft, and about the relationship between poetry and life. It is an interesting and valuable book in general, and in particular it is an essential commentary on the poet's own poems and her methods of practice. It should be read by everyone who takes her poetry seriously.

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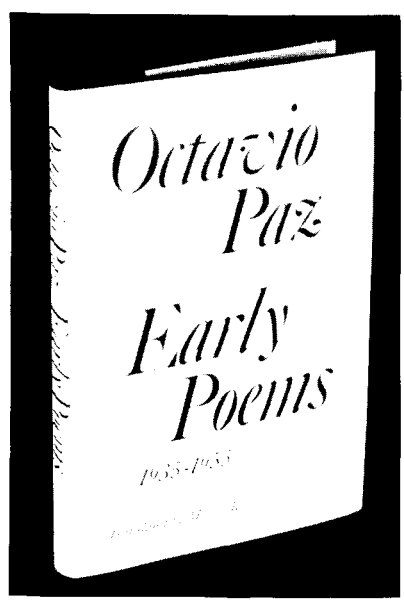

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